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# the Timely Topics

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PLEASE RSVP  
ADULT ONLY

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## Giving Effective Instructions to Kids

Too often instructions or commands are implemented incorrectly, which decreases the likelihood that your child will follow your directions as a parent. We often talk too much when making a request. We repeat the request (nagging), or we give too many explanations about the request. **Research shows that when instructions are given correctly, compliance increases 30%.**

Another mistake that can often be made when making requests is to state it in a question format. When you phrase it in a question form, you are opening up the opportunity for your child to say no. Avoid phrases such as “Wouldn’t you like to...?” or “Isn’t it time to...?” or “Don’t you want to make mom happy and...?” or “Can you...?”. Instead, you should make a polite direct request such as “Please put your pajamas on” or “Please sit with your pockets on the chair and your feet on the floor”.

Another common error is that we often make requests of children for them to stop doing something rather than telling them what to do. Instead, decide what you want to see them doing and give that request. Encourage an appropriate substitute so that they can learn for next time. **Page 3 shares more!**

## Giving Effective Instructions to Kids (Continued)

Instead of saying, “stop running, you could say “use your walking feet in the house please”.

Instead of saying “stop hitting your brother” when you are driving in the car, you could say “please put your hands on your lap”. Instead of saying “stop screaming”, you could say, “I will know you are ready for your snack when your voice is quiet”. If we provide children with the appropriate substitute, it is more likely that you will see compliance than if you use “stop commands” and they must come up with their own **replacement** behavior.

Another component that makes **instructions** more effective is the distance from which they are provided. The average request is made from 10 to 15 feet away; however, being about an arms-length away is the best distance. One thing to be aware of is that the greater the distance, the greater potential for the emotionality of the situation to increase. If you want compliance, get closer! Being closer also helps to make sure you can maintain eye contact while giving the request. Compliance increases once eye contact has been made. Say their name and wait for the eye contact before continuing with the request.

Another reason why children fail to comply at times is that we don't give them enough time to actually comply. Once you have made the request, wait 5 seconds. While you are waiting, you should not be talking to your

Loud or look at your watch. Just wait patiently with a neutral expression on your face. Research shows that 30-40% of the time, adults interrupt their own request during that waiting period by repeating the request again or giving a second or third request before they even completed the first request. This is called machine-gun requests and will decrease your percentage of compliance.

Another factor to keep in mind is that a request should only be completed twice. After two times, the percentage of compliance decreases. You do not want to teach your child that you will ask over and over again before actually giving a consequence.

Remember to always remain calm when giving a command. We don't want to send the message to our children that the only time they should listen is when our voice is louder and firmer. Finally, you want to remember that you need to be descriptive when you are giving a command. Rather than saying, “clean up your room”, you should say “put your toys in the toy baskets”. The more vague your request is, the less compliance you will get. If you want to increase your child's independence with certain tasks, you could create a picture list, breaking down each step of a more complex request such as “clean your room”.

### Challenge

Which one of these suggestions could you work on this week to increase your child's compliance?

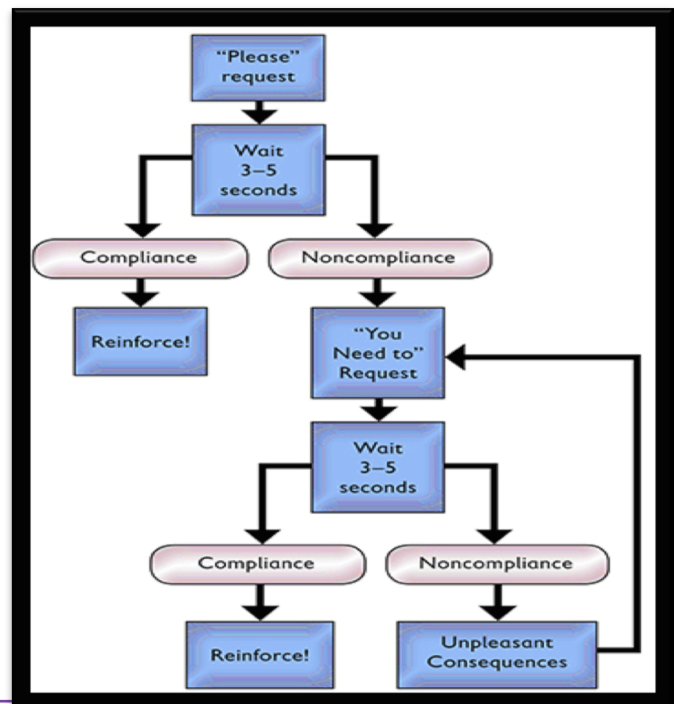
# Precision Requests

There is an efficient formula that helps to put all of the necessary components into practice in order to maximize the amount of compliance from your child. This will work best if you use this with all of your children, rather than just with the child with whom you are having compliance problems.

Begin your first request with a please statement. For example, “Bobby, please put the toys into the toy basket”. After the first request, you need to wait 3-5 seconds. Sometimes you may need to give up to 10 seconds for younger children with slower processing speeds. If your child follows through after the first request, give lots of praise and reinforcement. If they do not follow through with the request after 5-10 seconds, then you can move on to the second request.

The second request changes a little by adding in the key word “need”. You can say, “Bobby, you *need* to put the toys into the toy basket”, or you can say “Bobby, I *need* you to put the toys into the toy basket”. Either way is okay as long as you are emphasizing that key word *need*. After this request, you again want to wait 5-10 seconds for them to comply. If they comply with your request, provide praise and reinforcement. If they fail to comply, you then need to follow through with a planned unpleasant consequence. Your child only gets two reminders before they get that unpleasant consequence. This will decrease the amount of times you are constantly reminding your child to do something.

What is something that is unpleasant for your child? Often removing your attention or a brief timeout following the failure to complete a task can be effective as an unpleasant consequence. However, refer to the parent handout on timeouts, to ensure you are doing the timeout correctly! Another consequence could be removing access to a specific activity or item for a certain amount of time. Whatever your unpleasant consequence may be, you have to make sure you have it ready to use when they don't follow through with that second request. Remember that even after you administer the unpleasant request, you must follow through with the same request starting at the beginning of the sequence. If you do not follow through, your child is getting out of completing your requests; therefore, it is essential that you repeat the precision requests for the same behavior again after the unpleasant consequence is over.



# Parenting Classes!

**\*Giving Effective Instructions to Kids!**

**\*Tips To Parenting Two-year-olds**

**Are You Concerned About Autism?**

**ADULTS ONLY / NO CHILDREN PLEASE!**

Class: Giving Effective Instructions to Kids

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd

Time: 9:45 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. OR 12:45 p.m. – 1:45p.m.

Class: Tips To Parenting Two-year-olds

Date: Wednesday, May 22nd

Time: 11:15 a.m.

Class: Are You Concerned About Autism

Date: Tuesday, May 21<sup>st</sup>

Time: 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

Location: Jordan Child Development Center

2827 West 13400 South Riverton, Utah

Park in the Visitor Parking on the Westside of the school

Enter the school through the Southwest doors

RSVP: [Rachelle.blair@jordandistrict.org](mailto:Rachelle.blair@jordandistrict.org) OR call (801) 567- 8510

Resources provided by:

The Touch Kid Parent Book