

Keeping instructions positive

Positive Instructions

Instructions are usually most effective, both for listening and for behaviour, when they are positive.

Saying what you don't want also tends to make children focus on that – try this: “Don't think about a blue car”... what are you thinking of?!

Instead of telling a child what **not** to do, focus on **telling them what they can do instead**.

E.g. “Don't run” is a negative – try saying “let's see good walking!”
 “Don't drop it” – try saying “hold on tight!” instead, or “keep holding it like that”
 “Stop touching” – how about “come and see this” instead?

You can combine the two things e.g. “That's too loud. Can you use your quiet voice?”, “You can't hold the knife but you can hold this spoon”.

Some children benefit from more specific information about what to do e.g. “hands down”, “feet on the floor”, or a specific distraction such as a fiddle toy.

As children get older, they can usually think of something else they can do themselves, but if they can't, or they don't understand enough language yet, you'll need to help.

Remember that showing what you want is also really helpful e.g. “like this!”

This also gives you a brilliant opportunity to **give praise!!**

Use specific praise such as “good listening”, “good walking”, “I like that you....” to help them understand what they did well.

This is much easier said than done, but it can make a huge difference!!

