

## Good Rules for Great Instructions

Make Eye Contact - Look your child in the eye when you're giving them a direction. Call your child's name and make sure that you have their attention when you issue your command.

Ask your child to repeat the instruction back to you. If you want to make sure that they heard what you said to them, ask them to repeat it. The act of saying the direction out loud will help them remember it.

Simple one-step actions. Break it down to small steps. Instead of saying "Clean your room," try saying "Make your bed" or "Put your toys in your toy box." You might end up having to issue more commands by breaking your instructions down in this way, but your child will be more successful in accomplishing the task.

Be specific. Telling our kids to "be nice" or "be polite" isn't always clear for them. Neither is it clear when we say "this room is a mess". Try commands such as "Use nice words" / "Keep your hands to yourself". Or "when we are at Erik's house, say please, thank you, excuse me". "Please put away your things off the floor".

Give a command; don't ask questions. When we say "Will you do the dishes?" or "Do you want to do the dishes?", what will most kids say? State it as a fact "unload the dishwasher."

Give a command, not an invitation. Don't use the word "let's" in your directions. "Let's brush your teeth," then that sounds like you and your child are about to go brush their teeth. If your child is able to brushing teeth on their own, then say "Go brush your teeth".

Give limited (or no) explanation. Giving an instruction simply, no need for a long explanation. Give your instruction and let them follow it. For example, if you say "Make your bed because we're going to the movie, and I want your room to be clean before we leave so that when we get home we don't have any chores left to finish," then you lost them way back at "movie." Make it simple: "Make your bed," and your child will probably make their bed.

Tell them what you want them to do. If it has a No/Don't/Stop/Quit/Not, you're not clear what you want. Instead of "quit fighting with your sister", try saying "Play Candyland with your sister."

Follow up / follow through. Be ready to follow up and make sure they are doing it. They may need a reminder. If they still don't, then a reminder and a consequence.

Praise. When they do what you ask, give them verbal praise. You can say something like, "Great job picking up your Legos" or "Thanks for helping sort the laundry."