

GIVING EFFECTIVE COMMANDS

When giving directions or commands to a child, you may be able to improve compliance simply by following these guidelines.

- **Pick and choose when you give commands**
 - Only give commands when it is important
 - Ensure you have the time to follow-through and provide consequences for compliance/noncompliance
- **Get the child's attention**
 - Make eye contact, say the child's name
 - Be in the same room as the child
 - Reduce potential distractions (e.g., turn off the TV or other electronics)
- **Only give commands the child is capable of completing**
 - Do not command a child to complete a task that is too difficult
- **Make commands direct and simple**
 - Give commands as statements in a polite, matter-of-fact tone of voice
 - Do not phrase commands as questions or suggestions
 - Example: "Will you take out the trash?" "Do you want to put on your coat?"
- **Give only one command at a time**
 - Give one command at a time
 - Provide a consequence for compliance/noncompliance after each command
- **State commands positively**
 - Tell the child what *to do* instead of what *not to do*
 - Example: "Please get off the bed and go outside to play." Instead of "Don't jump on the bed."
- **Make limited use of explanations for the command**
 - Answering too many "why" questions distracts from the command
 - If you do provide rationales do so either before the command or after the child complies with the command
 - Example: "We're going to visit Grandma, and it's cold outside, so you need to put on your coat now"
 - Example: Please put on your coat [Child complies]. Thank you for putting on your coat. We're walking over to Grandma's and it's cold outside."
- **If possible, give choice commands**
 - If the child can make a choice, let the child know that in the command (e.g., "Please put on your red coat or your blue coat.")