

# Child Compliance

## Five Initial Steps

1. **Clear, Concise Instructions.** When you want your child to do something, use a simple direct instruction (for example: "Pick up your shoes.") This will insure that your child understand exactly what you expect. If your child is under the age of three, give only one instruction at a time. No matter how old the child is, only give instructions that you really want the child to obey.
2. **No Questions.** Do not use a question when you want your child to do something (for example, do not say, "Would you like to pick up your shoes?") When you ask your child a question, you give the child a choice and you must be willing to accept "No" for an answer. There is nothing wrong about giving choices, but, if you really want your child to obey, speak directly,.
3. **Wait.** Do not repeat the instruction. Be silent for 5 seconds after you give an instruction and watch your child.
4. **Praise Compliance.** If your child begins to obey the instruction within 5 seconds, immediately praise or attend to your child. Compliance is desirable behavior. You encourage behavior by using your attention when it occurs.
5. **Make it Easier.** If your child does not make any effort to obey in 5 seconds, repeat your instruction, making the task a bit easier or a bit more obvious. Here are 3 ways to do this:
  - a. Move closer to the child.
  - b. Use a gesture (point).
  - c. Do part of the task for the child (hand the child the object you want picked up)
  - d. Or combine a, b, and c in some way.

Remember: These are "initial" steps. Your child may disobey even if you've given the instruction precisely. Please be patient.

## Big Jobs

Preschool children will not sustain their attention to big jobs. They dawdle and get distracted very easily. For example sending a 3-year-old to his or her room to clean it up by themselves will not work. Even if the child obeys your request by walking to the room and beginning to clean up, the child will soon tire and start to play. Here is a good strategy to handle big jobs like cleaning up.

1. Initial Instruction plus Rationale; "It's time for bed, so we have to pick up all your toys."
2. Standard Procedures until Child Effort: Use praise and repeated instructions as needed to provoke initial effort.
3. Help and Continue to Praise
  - a. As long as the child is picking up, do these two things:
    - i. Help the child
    - ii. Provide attention (praise, chat, etc.)
  - b. If the child dawdles or stops, do these three things:
    - i. Stop helping
    - ii. Re-instruct the child to continue. ("You must finish picking up your toys".)
    - iii. Once the child starts to work, help out and praise again.\

## Stop Instructions

When you request that your child stop doing something use the same instruction/praise presented above. There are two procedural differences, however, that make “Stop” instructions different from “Go” instructions. Another component (warning and Time-Out) will be added later when compliance is instituted.

1. If you’ve told your child to stop doing something and the child continues, **do not** wait 5 – 10 seconds to give your warning. Warn the child immediately to stop. The reason is simple. If you’ve told the child to stop and the child continues, s=he or she has now disobeyed. There is no reason to wait. In contrast, when giving “Go” instructions, it is perfectly reasonable to give young children a moment to finish what they are doing and get started on the new task.
2. After your child obeys a request to stop doing something, always discuss the reason for your request. When children understand the reason why they can’t do something, it seems to help them remember and accept the request. Here is a typical sequence involved in a “Stop” request.

Child: Playing with the TV

Mother: “Please leave the TV alone.”

Child: Stops touching the TV.

Mother: “Thanks, you’re too young to adjust the TV. You might hurt it by accident. Please remember to ask me if you need help.”