

Learning Links' Tip Sheet

Following Directions



Children don't follow directions for a number of reasons. They may not be paying attention when the direction is given or they may not understand some or all of the language used. They might find it hard to see the reason for the direction or perhaps they find it hard to remember what is said or the order of things they are being asked to do.

It may just be that the directions were poor.

To help give your child the best chance of following directions, here are some things you can do.

Gain your child's attention

To help, try to remove as many distractions as possible; use a signal if necessary rather than raising your voice; wait until your child or children have shown that they are attending; call your child or children by name; make eye-contact and don't hand out equipment or other things before giving the direction.

Give clear directions

Organise your directions in a sequence to avoid confusion. Ensure that you give verbal instructions using your child's vocabulary level not your own. Include no more than two directions at a time. Repeat directions as many times as necessary in a calm, positive manner and provide a physical demonstration if necessary. Routine directions can also be displayed visually.

Check for understanding

Ask your child or specific children to repeat the directions and/or demonstrate the directions.

Monitor your child's progress and provide feedback

Keep an eye on how quickly and efficiently your child or children complete set tasks. If in a classroom situation, keep moving around the classroom, providing continual feedback to groups and individual children.

Remediate if necessary

Even with the best directions, there may be children who don't follow directions for some reason. Check to see who is having problems and repeat/reteach if necessary. Help your child complete directions if necessary.

The information in Learning Links' Tip Sheets is prepared by experienced early childhood professionals. Each child is unique and this material is not necessarily suitable for every child, parent or carer. We recommend you discuss this information with your child's therapist or education professional prior to using these tips.



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