



Giving Effective Instructions Parent Directed Interaction (PDI)

RULE	RATIONALE	EXAMPLES
Make commands direct, not indirect.	Removes uncertainty about whether the child is being asked or told. Helps the child understand that the adult is expecting follow-through, not offering a suggestion.	Direct: "Sit on the chair." Indirect: "Would you like to sit?" Direct: "Put your toys away." Indirect: "Let's clean up your toys."
Make commands single and small, not compound.	Short, one-step directions are easier for children to process and remember. Breaking tasks down increases success and creates more chances to reinforce cooperation.	Single: "Put your shoes in the closet." Single: "Make your bed." Compound: "Put your shoes away and make your bed."
State commands positively. Tell the child what to do, not what to stop doing.	Children respond more effectively when they are told the desired behavior rather than being corrected with "don't" or "stop." This provides clear guidance for what action to take.	Do: "Keep your feet on the floor." Instead of: "Don't climb on the counter."
Make commands specific, not vague.	Clear directions reduce confusion and help both the child and parent know whether the instruction has been followed.	Specific: "Use your indoor voice." Vague: "Talk nicely." Specific: "Please walk." Vague: "Behave."
Use a neutral tone of voice instead of pleading or yelling.	Children are more likely to comply when instructions are given calmly and confidently. A steady tone keeps interactions more positive and reduces power struggles.	Neutral: "Come sit next to me." Yelling: "Sit down now!"
Be polite and respectful.	Polite language models appropriate social behavior and reduces resistance. Respectful requests make cooperation more likely.	"Please pass me the crayon." "Sit next to me, please."
Give rationales before the command or after compliance.	Explaining expectations at the right time increases cooperation and reduces back-and-forth arguing during the task.	Before: "We're going to Grandma's, so please put on your coat." After: "Nice listening. Now we're ready to go."
Use commands only when really necessary.	Giving too many directions can feel overwhelming and makes it harder to follow through consistently. Selective use of commands keeps them effective.	Child kneels on chair during dinner. Instead of correcting every movement, parent chooses not to respond.
Incorporate choices when appropriate.	Offering limited choices supports independence and helps prevent control struggles while still maintaining boundaries.	"You can watch TV quietly or read a book." "Use your indoor voice or play outside."