



IES Grant #  
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# Teach Strategy Follow Directions



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Following directions with a trusted adult, like a teacher or a caregiver, is an important skill for young children to develop. By establishing small opportunities to practice following directions, your child can learn that good things happen when they listen to you!

1

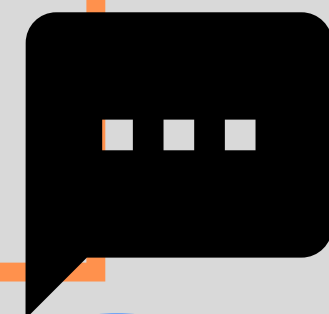
Identify times during the day when you can include opportunities for your child to practice following your directions. The goal of this exercise is to teach your child that good things happen when they listen to trusted adults (like you!) and follow through with necessary tasks. This can be done in small, easy ways throughout the day!



2

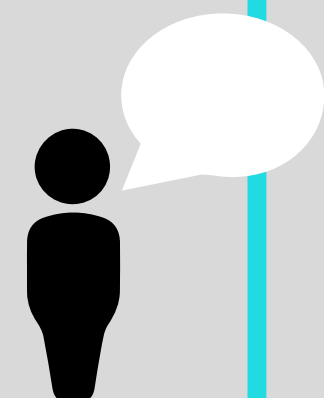
Provide a direction for your child to complete. These should be short, simple tasks that your child can easily do and that they are highly likely to follow through with! For example:

- "Kick your soccer ball!" when they're playing in the backyard with a friend
- "Drink some juice," when they've said they're thirsty
- "Pick out your favorite show," when you've handed them the iPad
- "Say 'hi' to dad!" when dad walks in



3

- If your child doesn't complete the task, gradually increase the amount of help you give until they complete it. For example: rephrase your direction, point at the task, or turn their shoulders in the right direction.
- Once your child completes the task, provide positive descriptive feedback and high quality attention for following directions.
- If your child begins to engage in challenging behavior, stay calm and avoid attending to the behavior.



4

Repeat this process at different times throughout the day, during different activities, and with different tasks. Get creative with the directions you give them, and give lots of positive feedback! The more your child comes into contact with reinforcement and positive feedback for following directions, the more positive the experience will be for them!



5

As your child experiences success with following your directions, you can start to slowly and gradually step them up. Ask them to do tasks that are slightly longer, slightly more complex, or more neutral (not something your child likes or dislikes).

**\*Tip: Avoid things your child doesn't like!\***

For example:

- Have them hand you something that is close to them
- "Throw this away, please," as they're walking by the trash can

## Helpful Hints!

- Keep it to one or two directions in a short period of time - too many tasks can start to get frustrating, even if they are things your child wants to do!
- Arrange some of these practices sessions so that your child can earn extra time with a favorite toy or activity, or more of a favorite snack when they follow through.
- Explain to your child why you're asking them to do what you're specific things, especially when they are really important - like not touching the hot stove or holding your hand to cross the street!



For more information on teaching your child new skills, [click here](#).

