

Tips for Giving Directions

During Transitions

with kids under 5 years old

First, take a deep breath

- ✦ This breath is for YOU, because giving directions for transitions can be HARD when kids are likely to push limits and test your patience (this is normal).
- ✦ The more regulated you feel, the more likely the transition will be smoother.

Get their attention BEFORE giving any directions

- ✦ Call their name
 - ✦ Tap their shoulder
 - ✦ Walk in their line of eyesight
- This helps reduce frustration on both sides!*

Use Statements (Instead of Questions)

- "It's time for your bath!"
instead of
"Are you ready for your bath?"
- ✦ Most of the time directions during transitions & routines are not optional, so let's make sure we communicate that to them too

Give One Direction at a Time

- "Time to put your trucks in the bucket."
instead of
"Put your trucks in the bucket, blocks over there and don't forget to grab your books to take to them room!"
- ✦ When we give 1 direction at a time, it makes it more likely they will listen to you!

Less Words

- ✦ Try to use 10 words or less!
- ✦ No need to overwhelm them with words and exhaust yourself in the process.

"First, Then" Statements

- ✦ Use "First____, Then____" statements to provide clear, direct expectations
- "First we put on your shoes, Then we go to the park."

Be Specific

- ✦ Be specific, so they know exactly what to do.
- "Please go put your shoes on the shelf by the door."
instead of
"Go put your shoes away"

Count to 5

- ✦ After you give a direction, count to 5 in your head before you repeat yourself or give another direction.
- ✦ This gives your child a chance to process the information and make choices.
- ✦ If we move too quickly, it is less likely they will listen.

Pair Words with Gestures

- ✦ When we use our body language and gestures to provide visual cues, it helps them process information visually (and not just from our words)
- ✦ "It's time to put on our shoes" (while pointing or walking over the shoes)
- ✦ "It's time for us to leave" (While we stand up and move towards the door)
- ✦ This is especially important for kids under 3 years old

Don't fall into the trap of repeating yourself

- ✦ If you have said it more than 3 times, you've said it too many times.
- ✦ And your creating a cycle where your child now knows you are willing to repeat yourself before the listen.

Be mindful of your expectations

- ✦ It is important to have developmentally appropriate expectations.
- ✦ Little kids won't listen 100% of the time and that is NORMAL.

Recognize the Successes

- ✦ Share with them when you notice they DO follow through with your directions.
- ✦ "Thank you for getting your shoes on, now we can go to the park!"
- ✦ Celebrate the wins! This makes it more likely they will do it again.