



Telling Kids What to Do



Professor Matt Sanders

When children refuse to cooperate, it may be related to the way instructions are given. Here are some common traps.

Too many. The more instructions you give, the more opportunities to disobey.

Too few. Children may sometimes seem disobedient because no one has taken the time to give them clear information on what is expected.

Too vague. Shouting your son's name, then pausing and frowning because he is jumping on the couch might not be of much help if he has also just teased his sister. State clearly what behaviours you find unacceptable.

Asking, not telling: Don't phrase an instruction as a question. If you ask: "Would you like to go to bed now?" be prepared for them to say: "No".

Poorly timed. Asking your child to do something while they are busy watching their favourite television show will probably result in them ignoring the instruction.

Shouting from a distance. Instructions shouted from one room to another are often ignored simply because parents are not there to back up the instruction.

Emotionally laden. Children react to the emotional tone of what parents say to them. Calling children "stupid" or an "idiot" shows disapproval of the child rather than the child's behaviour. Although it can be difficult, parents should work to control expressions of anger when giving children instructions.

If you want your child to stop doing something, remember to tell them what to do *instead*. Also tell them the consequence of disobeying. Give your child time to cooperate and praise them when they do so – or carry out the consequence if they refuse.

Professor Matt Sanders is founder of the Triple P - Positive Parenting Program. For more Triple P help log on to the website of the Brisbane South Division of General Practice www.bsdgp.com.au and go to the "Community" page.



ConnectingCOMMUNITIES

Brisbane South Division
of General Practice

Source: www.triplep.net

Brisbane South Division of General Practice

PO Box 211, Salisbury, 4107

(07) 3274 1886

Contact: Emily Baird
(Program Manager— Triple P)