

BRIDGE ROAD SCHOOL

FOCUS OF THE WEEK

Following Instructions

Learning to follow instructions is a very important life skill. It is important to teach children that it's important to follow instructions, not just to please or avoid punishment, but to make their own lives easier as well. After all, a child's health and safety can depend on their ability to follow instructions and children function better in school, sports and other group activities when they know how to carry out instructions.



10 Tips to Help Children Follow Instructions

Ask for your child's attention Ask for your child's attention by saying "look at me, please. I need you to listen now" You may make it easier by moving into your child's line of sight.

Minimize distractions Once you have your child's attention, you want to keep it. Minimize any distractions like video games or TV before giving any directions. You can model this behaviour by giving your child your full attention when giving instructions. This shows your child what you are saying is important.

Speak quietly It may be tempting to speak louder or speak over your child when there is something you need to say or get done. But you may capture their attention better by speaking in a softer voice. Giving directions in a calm, even tone. Children are able to focus more easily on what you have to say when they don't have to process the tone and volume too.

Use 'wait time' At Bridge Road School we often use 'wait time' which is a 3-7 second pause after you say something or ask a question. Research shows that children are far better at processing information and respond appropriately when they are able to let it sink in.

Check for understanding Checking for understanding goes hand in hand with giving your child some 'wait time'. Ask your child to repeat your instructions back to you. Or you can ask them to explain your instructions in their own words. This gives children the chance to ask questions and also gives you a chance to clarify what you said in case they misunderstood anything.

Tell, don't ask Many parents phrase directions as question, such as "would you set the table please?" Your child may think they have a choice about following directions. Rephrase what you said so that you are telling your child instead of asking. Simply saying "set the table please" can make a big difference.

Give instructions one at a time Younger children with learning and attention difficulties may have trouble following a sequence of steps. Children often get stuck after following the first instruction, try and give instructions one at a time.

Number your directions Help your child follow multi-step directions by actually putting a number to them. Typically, people can hold up to four things in their working memory at a time. This is easier to do when they're connected or there's a way to make them more memorable. Saying things like "There are three things you need to do," or use words like first, second, then next and last.

Be precise in the what you say Children who struggle with planning and organization or language may have trouble with vague directions. You may think your child isn't following directions but they may in fact have trouble figuring out how to get started. Be specific. For example, you may get better results by saying, "Please put your toys away, pick everything up off the floor and make your bed" instead of "Clean your room".