

How do we get our children to listen to us?

No matter what the age of a child, a common complaint uttered by parents is, “How can I get him to listen to me and do what I tell him? Especially for children with behavioral problems, this is often a very difficult task to achieve and one that is very frustrating for parents. Parents will often say, “I don’t think I am asking too much of him to just listen.” Often children are disrespectful; oppositional and parents seem to be at a loss as to how to get their child to do as they ask and to be respectful towards them. Here are a few simple rules in getting your child to listen to you when you are giving them a task to complete or instructions.

- 1.) When giving instructions to your child, make sure that whatever you are asking them to do, you plan on following through with consequences if they decide to not do what you have asked. If you are asking the same thing over and over and have no consequences when they decide to not do it, then your commands are useless and ineffective.
- 2.) Do not present a command to your child as a request or as if you are asking them some big favor to do for you. It is your child’s responsibility to clean up their room, wash the dishes, complete their homework, etc... If you are begging or trying to cajole them by doing what is already their responsibility, then you are not teaching them to be responsible; mature individuals. State commands directly and calmly, but do not pose as a question. For example, “Go clean up your room before we eat dinner.”
- 3.) Give one command to your child at a time. Do not give them a list of things that you want them to do. Most children are not able to remember more than one or two commands at a time, especially younger children.
- 4.) Ask your child to repeat back to you what you have just asked them to do. This is much more effective than your child getting into their room and then forgetting what you have asked them and coming back out of their room to ask you to tell them what to do again. This will only frustrate you as the parent!
- 5.) For your child to know what you are telling them to do, make sure they are listening. Children are often not paying attention and are watching television or are in “their own little world” and if they are not looking at you directly, then they are probably not listening. Most parents become increasingly angry and frustrated when they have to repeat commands to their children over and over again. This is the most common complaint of parents, especially with parents that have children with behavioral problems.
- 6.) If you plan on giving your child a list of things that you want them to do, then it is a good idea to make up a list of chores or responsibilities and post on the refrigerator or in a conspicuous place so they can be reminded. Do not post a chore list in a place that is not clearly visible.

7.) Lastly, give your child a timeline or a deadline for completing the task or chore that you have assigned to them. If you do not set a deadline such as, “I want your room cleaned and I am giving you 15 minutes to do it”, then your child will probably become distracted and the job will not be completed.

Being able to give your child commands that uses these elements takes a little practice, however the more you implement these qualities into your commands to your child, the more effective your commands will be. As a result, your child will be much more likely to listen to you when you are speaking directly to them. Remember when giving your child commands, make sure you do not give them too many, make the commands simple, and most importantly that you plan to enforce consequences if your commands are not followed.

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