

Helping Children Follow Directions



Some children have problems following directions. You can help your child learn how to follow directions by creating an environment that encourages the child to listen and learn. Here are some suggestions:

- ✓ Noises, such as the television, radio, dishwasher and other people talking, make it hard for your child to listen and follow directions. Before you give your child a direction, turn off the noise or take him somewhere quieter. If you cannot turn off or move away from the noise, stand close to your child so that other noises are less distracting.
- ✓ Let your child know when it is time to listen. Call your child's name and say, *"Time to listen."* You can also give your child a signal such as pointing to your ear.
- ✓ Use actions with words. The action makes it easier for your child to understand and follow directions. For example, pretend to wash your hands while saying, *"Go wash your hands."*
- ✓ Ask your child to repeat directions after you say them.
- ✓ Speak clearly and slowly. Emphasize important words in the direction. For example, say, *"Bring me the **red** blanket, please."*
- ✓ Give one direction at a time. Wait for your child to finish doing the first direction before you give another direction.
- ✓ Give your child extra time to understand and carry out directions. Be patient.
- ✓ If your child does not follow a direction, it may be because he did not understand. Make your direction easier to understand by using simpler words or shorter directions.

For more information, contact your community speech-language pathologist.
