



Challenging Behavior Tip Sheet: Following Directions

"HELP! My child has a hard time following directions when I ask them to do something."

What you can do:

- Listen to your own instructions — make sure they're clear, specific, and consistent.
- Make sure directions are positive (i.e., they tell the child to do something rather than to stop doing something).
- When the child follows the instruction correctly, make sure you praise them- through encouragement or smiles.
- If your child is having a hard time following directions with more than one step (e.g., Put your lunch in your backpack, get your coat on, and tie your shoes), try to present only one step at a time. Give the next step only after they finish the first.
- Here are some examples of good directions — "When you are finished eating, put your bowl in the sink." "Wash your hands before you come to the table for dinner."
- "Put your pajamas on and then brush your teeth." "Climb into your car seat, please."
- Make sure to praise your child for each step they complete. Use specific praise — say, "I like how you____." Kids will repeat behaviors that get attention.