

Getting Children to Listen

When your children don't listen to you.... what can you do?

Some things don't work: giving orders-criticizing-putting them down-begging them-all make children more stubborn, defiant, or hurt.

Try These Ideas:

- **First, go over to your child-and look her or him in the eye.** With young children, touch them to get their attention. Talking from across the room, or from another room, seldom works. When you are close the child will hear you better.
- **Tell your child what to do, instead of what not to do.**
Change "don't..." into "do...".
"Walk instead of running."
"Keep your paint on these papers."
- **Be clear-be specific.**
Not "Be a good boy and clean up."
Instead "Put your toys in this basket."
Not "Get ready to go."
Instead "Put on your jacket and hat and bring your backpack."
- **Give your child information.**
Describe the problem. Information helps children figure out what to do.
"I'm making a phone call and need quiet."
"Ants come in the house when jelly is on the floor."

Use fewer words. Children "tune us out" when we talk on and on. Instead of a lecture, use a word or phrase to remind them. "Walk." "Books...jacket." "Homework before T.V."

- **Don't back yourself into a corner. Use "when" instead of "if".**

Not "If you don't finish lunch you can't go outside."

Instead "When you finish lunch you can go outside."

TIP: The louder you yell, the less effective you will be. Screaming and yelling lets your child know that you are out of control.

Instead of Punishment

All children misbehave at times. It's a natural part of growing up.

Why isn't punishing them a good idea?

When children are punished, they become hurt, angry, and defiant. They forget the wrong they did; instead they remember the "wrong" that was done to them.

Children need to learn what to do instead of misbehaving. Punishment doesn't teach them that. Our job as parents is to help them learn.

Try These Ideas:

- **Clearly, calmly, firmly, tell them what you expect them to do or how to take care of a problem.**

"I can't work when my tools are all over. Hang them on the rack and put the nails in the can." "Play ball in back of the house, not here near the window."

If they argue, don't get trapped arguing back. Simply use the "broken record" Method: repeat your calm and firm statement.

- **Express strong disapproval of necessary.** But be careful not to attack with your words. Tell them how you feel about their behavior...and why.

"I don't like what is going on here! Somebody could get badly hurt!"

- **Give a choice...but only a choice you can live with.**

"You may walk beside me or ride in the cart. You decide."
"Supper is at 5:30. Be home then if you want to eat."

- **Take action.** Follow through when you have given a choice or what to expect.

"Since you are not staying beside me, you must ride in the cart."

"Since you are still arguing over the toy, I'll put it away until after supper."

TIP: Remember you are the grown up. Stay cool, firm, calm and clear.