

Guides in Speech

Suggestions as to Ways Adults Guide Children (Adapted from the Nursery School by Katherine Read)

1. State suggestions of directions in a positive rather than negative form. Tell the child what you want him to do rather than what you don't want him to do. The easiest way to do this in general is to avoid using the word "don't". You'll have better results if you say, "Walk around the table" instead of "Don't bump the table." This is using a positive, instead of a negative, suggestion.
2. Give the child a choice only when you intend to leave the situation up to him.
3. Use only words and a tone of voice which will help the child feel confident and reassured, not afraid or guilty or ashamed.
4. Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another or by encouraging competition. When several children are playing together, you need to help them like each other more, rather than less. Remember this: children are more likely to grow into cooperative, considerate people if they have had fun with others and learned to like them. They will not learn to like others if we say to them, "See if you can't beat Johnny getting dressed." It gives them a poor reason for working and makes it harder for them to get along together.
5. Use your voice as a teaching tool. Use a quiet, confident tone of voice when you speak to a child. If you speak quietly to a child; he will pay more attention to you than if you raise your voice and speak in a commanding tone. A commanding tone often makes children feel resistant- in other words makes them want not to do what you suggest, just as you yourself would feel in their place.
6. Redirection is likely to be most effective when it is consistent with the child's own motives or interests.
7. Give your directions in as few words as possible, and make them specific, not general. The child who is just learning to go to the toilet regularly will understand if you say to him "toilet time now" and hold out your hand for him to come. He may say "no" if you say, "Well, you've played a long time, you should go to the toilet. Come on. We'd better hurry."
8. Interest the child in desirable behavior. Help children by making desirable behavior seem interesting. For example, "Let's pretend we're delivery people when we take the blocks back in the wagons is more fun than just having to put away the blocks."

You may help a child by giving her something to look forward to if she does her part by saying, for example, “As soon as you have washed your hands, we’ll have a story.”