

## Use “Praise that Works” to Increase Cooperation

Children want attention from their parents. But parents often pay more attention to misbehavior than to positive behavior. In this way, they may reward unwanted behavior rather than encourage behavior that they want.

Your positive attention (praise) is the best reward for wanted behavior.

Praise encourages more of the behavior you want from your child.

Identify **one or two unwanted behaviors** that you wish to change, such as

Ignoring your directions

Fighting with brothers or sisters

Talking rudely

Identify the **opposites of those unwanted behaviors**, such as

Following directions  
(even if only part of the  
directions)

Playing nicely with brothers or  
sisters

Talking politely

Praise the **opposite of the unwanted behavior**.

Example: You ask the child to clean her room, and she picks up her dirty clothes. She has done the **opposite** of the unwanted behavior. She has followed part of the directions.

Praise her behavior, even if toys and books are still on the floor.

**Look for progress,  
not perfection.**

Every time your child does the opposite of an unwanted behavior, praise the good behavior right away.

- Get close to your child.
- Describe the wanted behavior in positive words:
  - “Thanks for putting your clothes in the hamper!”
  - “Good job getting started on your math homework!”
  - “I see that you turned off the TV the first time I asked!”
- Add a gesture like thumbs up, a happy dance, a cheer, a hug, or a gentle touch.
- Use this “Praise that Works” every time your child does even part of the wanted behavior.



Be warm, excited, and enthusiastic when you praise your child.

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