



HIGH 5 COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

www.high5communicationresources.com
616.366.4231 (phone & fax) • 970.988.6718 (cell)

SPEECH & LANGUAGE THERAPY • INFANT + TODDLER ENRICHMENT CLASSES • FEEDING THERAPY

Your Mission:

TELL – DON'T ASK

In our society, it is considered most "polite" to give directions in question form rather than statements - especially for women. Consider how would you phrase it if you called your husband and asked him to pick up something you absolutely needed to have on his way home from work - diapers, for instance. It would probably sound something like this: "Hey honey, can I ask you a favor? Can you please stop and grab diapers on your way home from work?" Well....this IS very polite. But in reality, you need your husband to pick up the diapers and he really doesn't have much of a choice unless you want to have a serious mess on your hands.

I often hear caregivers give directions to their children in similar question forms rather than statement forms. For example:

- "Can you clean up?"
- "Are you ready to leave the park?"
- "Is it time for bed?"
- "Can you stop kicking me?"
- "Are you going to share?"
- "Can you be nice?"
- "Do you want to get your coat on?"

BUT....What happens when we offer our children choices and they don't ACTUALLY have a choice? For instance, if we say, "Are you ready to clean up?" and your child responds with "no" - do you listen? Or is your child now perceived as being difficult or behavioral? And how do you recover when you gave your child the power to say "no" and now you need to get that power back somehow - ?? **And MOST IMPORTANTLY** - what message are we sending to our children when we ask their opinion and then COMPLETELY IGNORE it - and even worse, make them feel like they are being "bad" for voicing their opinion??

When we are offered choices, and then informed that we actually don't have that choice, it is frustrating for everyone involved. Your child feels frustrated when you say, "Are you ready to leave the park?" and he tells you he is not ready to leave, and then you get frustrated that he is "not listening" or "being difficult."

The moral of the story: **if your child does not have a choice, do not phrase your request in the form of a question.** Rather, politely inform your child of the expectation and help your child

comply. If your child becomes upset or frustrated, empathize and console your child, but do not change the expectation. Allow your child processing time by giving her advance warning of the expectation or plans.

Examples:

(PAIR STATEMENTS WITH **POSITIVE LANGUAGE** STRATEGIES ALSO!!)

Instead of this...	Say this...
<p>Are you ready to leave the park?</p>	<p>Step 1: In 5 minutes, we will be leaving! We get to go down the slide 4 more times before we go!</p> <p>Step 2: We get to go down the slide 1 last time before we leave. This will be the last time we go down the slide and then we are getting in the car and going to the grocery store.</p> <p>Step 3: Ok, it is time to leave. Please find your coat.</p> <p><i>(if upset)</i> I see that you are feeling upset. I'm sorry that leaving the park makes you feel sad. It makes me feel sad to leave places that I love as well. But it is time to leave for today. We will come visit the park again tomorrow.</p>
<p>Do you want to stop kicking me?</p>	<p>I need you to keep your legs down. Legs down, please. (Physically and gently help your child keep legs down)</p>
<p>Would you like to share the cookie with your brother?</p>	<p>Half of this cookie will be your brother's. Would you like to break it in half or should I?</p> <p>It looks like you're having a hard time sharing the cookie with your brother. Let me help you.</p> <p><i>(if upset)</i> I see that you are feeling frustrated about sharing your cookie. Sometimes it is hard for me to share also. But it is not a choice to share your cookie. You can either have half the cookie or no cookie.</p>
<p>Can you sit down?</p>	<p>I need you to sit down, please. Sit down. (Help your child sit down) We always sit in our highchair, that is how we stay safe.</p>
<p>Will you stop touching the plant?</p>	<p>Hands off the plant, please. Hands off. I need you to stop.</p>
<p>Do you want to get in the car?</p>	<p>(Give advance warning that it will be time to go in x minutes) It's time to get in the car. Get your shoes on please.</p>