Giving Effective Instructions

1. **Reduce distractions before giving an instruction.** (e.g., shut off TV/stereo.)

2. **Make eye contact.**

3. **Say child’s name.**

4. **Use a firm voice.** Sound as if you expect to be listened to; businesslike; not angry or shrill.

5. **Be clear about what you want the child to do.**
   
   **Good instruction:** “Sally, please pick up your dirty socks.”
   
   **Bad instruction:** “You are such a pig. How can you sleep in a room like that?”
   
   If you give a direct instruction, it’s more difficult for your child to ignore you.

6. **State the instruction as an instruction.**
   
   Not a request, favor, or question.
   
   **Good instruction:** “Please take out the garbage. It’s time to go to bed, please put your pajamas on.”
   
   **Poor instructions:** “Will you take out the garbage for me. Don’t you think it’s time to go to bed now?”

7. **Give only one instruction at a time.**
   
   If you give more than one, you increase the chance that your child will tune you out.

8. **Always praise/reward as soon as your child follows an instruction.**
   
   It makes it more likely that your child will listen to your next instruction & it makes listening more enjoyable for the child.