

HOW CHILDREN LEARN, HOW ADULTS TEACH

For the very young child the process of learning is more important than the content. Sound educational objectives are necessary for a good school program, but the quality of the staff instructing the child determines the depth and breadth of learning. Children are continually being taught by the behavior of the adults around them. Adults need to be aware of the impact of their words and actions. Professional teachers know that children pattern their social and language skills after adult models. Listed below is a detailed guide for the staff of young children.

Guides in Speech for Adults	Examples of speech	
	Professional (postive)	Non-professional (Negative)
<p>1. State suggestions or directions in a positive rather than a negative form. Tell the child what to do, not what not to do.</p>	<p>“I’ll hold the hose while you climb.”</p>	<p>“Don’t climb that way.</p>
<p>2. Use speech as a teaching tool: be specific, use specific language.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">a. Use complete, descriptive sentences.</p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">b. Use a quiet voice.</p>	<p>“Can you place the wide block on the tall building?”</p> <p>“The crayons are on the shelf under the chalk board.”</p> <p>Often a soft voice quiets a noisy group more effectively than a loud voice.</p> <p>Walk over to a child to speak to him.</p>	<p>“Put the block up there.”</p> <p>“They are over (pointing) there.”</p> <p>Yelling, “Will you kids be quiet”</p> <p>Yelling across the room, “James, you quit that!”</p>
<p>3. Use only words or tone of voice which will make the child feel confident and reassured, not guilty or ashamed or dumb.</p>	<p>“You tell Johnny you need a turn. He doesn’t understand when you hit him.”</p> <p>“Can you tie your shoe laces?” “I’ll be glad to help. It’s a hard job.”</p>	<p>“Don’t you dare hit Johnny.” (implying you bad boy.)</p> <p>“Can’t you even tie your own shoe laces?” (implying, you stupid little dummy.)</p>

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<p>a. Show respect for the child and his/her culture. Never put down or demean a child's family.</p>	<p>“Yes, lots of children don't have a Daddy. Do you have an uncle?”</p>	<p>“No wonder you behave, the way you do.”</p> <p>“What a bully. You're just like your sister.”</p> <p>“Hasn't your Mother taught you better than that?”</p> <p>“You should be ashamed of yourself.”</p>
<p>4. Appreciate the uniqueness of each child. Avoid motivating a child by making comparisons between one child and another, or by encouraging competition.</p>	<p>“What Johnny is doing looks like fun.”</p> <p>“What nice shapes made with the play dough.”</p>	<p>“Why can't you climb like Johnny does.”</p> <p>“Can't you make something that looks as good as Johnny's?”</p>
<p>5. Point out what the realistic consequences of undesirable behavior will be. Be sure to follow through.</p> <p>Never threaten a child in order to get him to do what you want.</p>	<p>“If you run your trike into Jeffery one more time you'll have to go inside. He doesn't like it.”</p>	<p>“Stop that – I'm going to tell your father and he'll whip you.”</p>
<p>6. Give a child a choice only when you intend to leave the situation up to him.</p>	<p>“Here's your jacket.”</p> <p>But if you don't know if a child is too cold or warm enough, then, “Do you want to put on your jacket?”</p>	<p>“Do you want to put on your jacket?” when the child must put on his jacket.</p>

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7. Make your directions effective by reinforcing them when necessary.	“It’s time to go inside,” and <u>move</u> yourself.	“It’s time to go inside,” and stand waiting to see if the child moves.
8. Affirm the child by calling him by name. Smile frequently, especially with greetings and observing.	“Hello, Joan, I’m glad to see you.”	“When did you get here?” - no friendly greeting or name affirmation.
9. Many children have learned to get attention through negative behavior. Ignore it, if possible. If correction is needed, do not call him by name; be as brief as possible, and tell him specifically what to do.	“Put that rock down.”	“Tim, I told you not to throw any rocks. If you do that again, ever, you won’t get any snacks. I’m sick and tired of your hurting children. Now you stop.”
10. You may tell a child that it makes you angry when he hits a child, etc., but be aware if you are really emotionally angry and back off. If a teacher is emotionally upset she is not at that time able to teach. Call in someone else. Know what angers you and learn to avoid or control it. Don’t shower your hostility on a child.	“Ray, it really makes me angry when you keep throwing sand in Timmy’s eyes. It hurts him!”	“That’s the last time you’ll ever play in the sand. Get inside, right now.”
11. Give a child time to solve his problems independently but be ready to assist when needed to avoid undue frustration. Ask questions to help him think through a solution.	“Timmy, could you turn the puzzle piece around?”	“This goes here, this way.” supplying the answer.

Young children learn best in a warm, encouraging atmosphere where there is plenty of time to make mistakes and to experiment fully with new behavior. Teachers undergird the learning child by creating a responsive environment, by suggesting the most appropriate words or actions and by generally providing sympathy, support and joy.

Guides for Action for Adults

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen carefully to the children. Be responsive. You do not have to initiate the conversation if you are attentive. 2. Be available to children. Sit on little chairs, on side of sandbox, stairs or floor. Be at a child's eye level whenever you can. 3. Avoid talking with adults unnecessarily. Your time and attention is needed by the children. 4. Demonstrate use of art materials but refrain from making a finished model for children to copy. Creativity may be stifled. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Redirection of children is most effective when consistent with the child's motive or interest. Why is the child acting as he does? Help him make a choice of another activity. 6. Necessary limits should be clearly defined and consistently maintained. Children understand and accept limits and feel more secure when they can depend upon adults to be consistent. 7. Create a consistent daily routine. Children feel secure when they can anticipate events. |
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