

# Provide clear directions that lead to desired actions

When we want children to do what we ask of them the responsibility largely lies with us as adults to enable them, and to make it happen. Still, we sometimes provide directions like this:

- "Now we're going to go outside which means that everyone has to clean up, and then you have to remember to pack what we're going to use afterwards, and it's raining outside so everyone has to wear rain gear, and make sure to hang it up when we return, so it dries when you come back in."
- "Would you mind cleaning up now?"
- "I get very upset when you choose to defy me like that, when I wanted you to clean up now."
- "Stop running indoors!"

This way it is not always clear for children what is expected of them.

If we expect children to be able to follow a direction, they must both receive the message and understand it. They should preferably also be in a state where you can expect them to manage what you ask of them. This is quite logical. An effective recipe for achieving it follows:

1. Check and adjust your own state - have faith that you will get the child to cooperate.
2. Establish contact with the child – an arm's length distance and face to face height is smart.
3. Check and adjust the child's state - validating feelings before giving your message can be wise.
4. Provide direction using few, simple words, and a gentle, friendly voice. The message should state what the child should start with - not what the child should stop with. Add "please" and a smile.
5. Follow up! Stay in the situation, showing patience and positive expectation until the child does what it is told to do. It might be a good idea to count to 10 silently, before you repeat the same sentence again, just as friendly.
6. Show the child that you are pleased with them.

"Now Sofie is going to clean up after herself. It probably won't be easy, but I think I'll make her manage! I'll go all the way over to her, bend down, and consider her mental state a bit before I tell her what to do.

"Sofie, I see you're having a lot of fun now; I totally understand if you want to continue. But now you must finish and clean up: Put all the toys in their right place now, please."

"No, I won't - I want to play more!"

"Put the toys away now, please."

"Oh, just a little bit more! I promise to clean up really quickly afterwards if I can play just a little longer!"

(two second pause) "Put the toys away, please."

"Okay then".

"Very good Sofie, it is great that you cleaned up».