

# Positive Behavior Strategies:

## Using Language to encourage compliance and following directions

*We use language to give directions and set rules for children every day. Small shifts in the way that we talk to children can make big differences in compliance and children's abilities to successfully follow directions. This may lead to fewer tantrums, less whining, and reduction in challenging behavior.*

- **Gain attention** prior to giving a direction
- **Give a direction** rather than ask a question
  - Example: "It's time to leave" instead of, "Do you want to leave now?"
- **Use specific, clear language**
  - Tell children what **TO** do, as opposed to what **NOT** to do
    - Replace *Don't* with *Do*
    - Example: Stay next to me, instead of Don't run away
  - Use language consistent with your child's level of understanding
    - Limit amount of steps given at one time
    - Offer choices
      - Do you want to walk or hop to the door?
    - Short, simple language
      - Example: "Get shoes"
  - Use visual cues such as a picture, pointing, modeling
- **Allow time for your child to process information**; remain calm/patient and repeat direction as needed using the same language
- **Be consistent with consequences**
- **Offer your child a reward** only when they follow a direction
- **Praise your child** when they are doing what you have asked.
  - "Great walking!"
  - "Nice manners! I like the way you are using your spoon"
- **Provide immediate reinforcement**
  - If a chart is not motivating, try a more immediate reward
  - Rewards should be highly motivating to your child
- **Use "First, then" or "When, then" statements**
  - Example: "*First* eat a green bean *then* you can have a cookie"
  - Example: "*When* you pick up all of your blocks, *then* you can go outside"
- **Use facts instead of demands**, according to your child's level of understanding
  - Example: "I remember, you need to put on your shoes before you go outside"
- **Make directions/jobs fun**, such as pretending to be a waitress when setting the table or pretending to be a wizard to clean up toys
- **Be enthusiastic and generous with praise**
  - Catch them being good

