In order to be successful, children must understand what is expected of them.

Too often, adults give messages that are confusing, overwhelming or phrased in the negative.

- When that happens, children do not have much chance of success as they do not know what they are supposed to do.

When children know what is expected of them, it is easier for everyone.
In order to be successful, children must understand what is expected of them.

Children who know what is expected of them and experience success are:

- Happier.
- Interact socially more positively.
- Learn better.

Children generally want to do the right thing - it is up to adults to help them.

If you listen carefully to adults guiding children, you often hear words like **don’t, stop, quit that, knock it off** and **cut it out**.

- Telling children **what not to do** does **not** help children be successful.
- Telling children **what not to do** does **not** help them learn what is expected of them.
- Telling children **what not to do** does **not** help them make appropriate choices for their behavior.

Which directions or phrases have you heard (or said) that fit in this category (telling children what NOT to do)?
By changing the way directions are given, you can help children learn what they should do and how they should do it (your expectations).

**Giving clear directions helps children be successful.**

**What directions or phrases have you heard (or said) that begin with the word DON’T?**

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**Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions**

Phrasing a direction in the positive (instead of in the negative) is one way of providing clear communication for a child.

- Telling a child what “not to do” can be very confusing.

When a child hears a negative direction (what “not to do”), he/she has to “translate” or “interpret” the message and try to figure out what to do.
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

For example, when you tell a child not to run (no running, stop running, don’t run), what options might the child have?

Let’s see what possible options (instead of running) the child could consider.

What could the child do instead of run?

Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

The child could:

• Jump.
• Skip.
• Hop.
• Dance.
• Roll.
• Sway.

• Jog.
• March.
• Walk.
• Crawl.
• Sit.
• And many more.
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

By telling the child, “don’t run,” you have **not provided** a clear direction.

You have **not told** the child what behavior is expected in order to meet your goal.

You have **not told** the child how to be successful.

In order for the child to be successful, the child needs to know what is expected.

Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

Before giving a child an instruction, you need to decide what you want – what behavior is expected.

What behavior do we want **instead of** running?

What is **our goal** for the child’s behavior?

What could we say **instead of** “don’t run?”
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

Providing children with clear messages can prevent misunderstandings and clarify your expectations of behavior.

This can lead to much greater success for the child - including feelings of enhanced self-esteem and a sense of taking responsibility for one’s own behavior.

Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

When we provide clear (specific) directions, we create an opportunity for the child to be successful.

We provide the child with a very clear picture of what he/she is expected to do.
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

We want to create a **visual image of success** for the child – create a picture in the child’s mind.

We want to make sure the child **knows how to be successful**.

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Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

**Let’s see how this works.**

When you say, “**don’t run,**” what picture did you create in the child’s head?

**What picture does the child see?**

- Is the picture in the child’s head the behavior that you want?
- Does the picture in the child’s head represent your goal, your expectation?
- Will the picture in the child’s head help the child to be successful?
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

Before we rephrase the direction, we need to think about our expectation – what the child can do to be successful – what our goal is for the child’s behavior.

1. The first step is to identify your goal.
   - What is your goal?
   - What is your expectation?
   - What behavior do you want?
   - What behavior will be successful?

This is sometimes the hardest part of the process as we often think in terms of what we don’t want instead of what we do want.

We are often in the habit of thinking about the “don’t” rather than the “do.”

Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

2. The next step is rephrase your goal into a clear direction.
   - What can you say to the child that puts a picture of success in the child’s mind?
   - What is your expectation?
   - What behavior do you want?
   - What behavior will be successful?

What direction can you give that will create a picture of success in the child’s mind?
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

Let’s go back to our example.

- Is the picture in the child’s head the behavior that you want?
- Does the picture in the child’s head represent your goal, your expectation?
- Will the picture in the child’s head help the child to be successful?

We can see that our words did not create a picture of success for the child. So, we need to determine our goal.

Positive Phraseding – Giving Clear Directions

What behavior do we want instead of running?

What picture do we want the child to see?

If we don’t know what the goal is, how will the child know how to be successful?
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

If our goal is for the child to WALK, what picture do we want to create in the child’s head?

How can we give the child a clear direction so that the child can be successful?

If we know what our goal is and we clearly communicate the goal, we can help the child be successful.

Now that we know how to do this, let’s practice together.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>What picture does this negative direction create in the child’s mind?</th>
<th>Identify the goal – the behavior – what you want for the child to be successful.</th>
<th>Rephrase your expectation (your goal) into a clear direction. Tell the child how to be successful.</th>
<th>What picture does this clear direction create in the child’s mind?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Don’t drag your coat in the dirt.</td>
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<td>2. Don’t splash the water.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Quit yelling.</td>
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### Positive Guidance: Giving Clear Directions

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<td>5. Don’t touch the plant.</td>
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<td>6. Don’t forget your hat.</td>
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<td>7. Don’t hit your friend.</td>
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<td>8. Quit spitting.</td>
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<td>9. Don’t talk with your mouth full.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Stop pushing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Quit making such a mess.</td>
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<td>12. Stop whining.</td>
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<td>13. Don’t slam the door.</td>
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<td>14. Don’t stand on the chair.</td>
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<td>15. Don’t forget to wash your hands.</td>
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<td>16. Don’t climb on the sofa.</td>
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<td>17. Stop throwing the blocks.</td>
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<td>18. Quit tearing the pages.</td>
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<td>19. Don’t be mean.</td>
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Be aware of every “don’t” that you say.

- When you hear yourself using “don’t” or “stop,” learn to rephrase.
- Think about the goal for the child’s behavior.
- Think about the picture of success that you can create for the child.
- Rephrase your direction into a clear statement that creates a picture of success in the child’s mind.
Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

Providing children with clear messages can prevent misunderstandings and clarify your expectations of behavior.

This can lead to much greater success for the child - including feelings of enhanced self-esteem and a sense of taking responsibility for one’s own behavior.

Positive Phrasing – Giving Clear Directions

For EVERY don’t, there IS a DO!

You just may need to practice to find them.