

Helping Your Child to Comply – How to Give Effective Commands

Although the Behavioral Management System will help encourage your child to comply with commands, how you give commands is critical to being heard, understood and complied with. Here are some tips:

1. Use clear language – make sure you state what and when you want the behavior to be completed. You must be able to identify when the behavior is completed. Don't ask it as a question or favor ("Would you do me a big favor...?") unless you are making compliance non-mandatory. Don't give multiple commands as this may be confusing and will reduce the chance for compliance.
2. Use calm language – if you get a bit of defiance or a poor attitude, calmly let them know that if they are choosing to not comply, you will need to charge them points. Ask them what they are deciding to do. Relax and take a deep breath – model composure. Use empathy to encourage compliance – "It seems like you are really annoyed with this request. Are you having a problem complying?" "I understand that you don't want to take out the trash, but it is your responsibility. You will get points for complying and I will need to remove points for non-compliance." Also help them to internalize self-coping statements by saying things like, "It will just take you a few minutes, and then you can get back to what you were doing" or "It really isn't that hard to do, it is an easy way to get points". Ultimately you may need to charge him/her points a few times before their compliance improves.
3. Give commands that match the ability and maturity of your child. Don't expect a younger child or a child of any age with ADHD to remember to do something later in the day or later in the week.
4. If your child is involved in something engaging (such as computer or video games) try and give them a time frame with reminders at 5, 2 and 1 minute before they must stop what they are doing and get on to your task. Let them know you will be giving them a countdown to help them remember. Don't attempt to use points as a threat expecting immediate compliance. This will simply encourage a power struggle that will not be helpful in gaining compliance. For computer excesses, use parental controls where possible– this is better than always getting into arguments.
5. Don't get into arguments about "why" the command should be complied with. Simply respond with a mechanistic and exact response like "Your father and I have decided that this is an appropriate responsibility and if you don't comply, you will not only lose points for not doing your responsibility, you will also lose points for disregarding directions." If they continue to ask persistently, despite your repeating the exact same mechanistic response, warn them that their questions are bordering on "badgering" for which you may need to take off points. "I don't really want to have to charge you for both non-compliance and now badgering. Simply do as you have been asked."
6. If you must remind a child to comply, avoid lectures and long-winded speeches. Simply say in a firm and direct (not called out from across the house) voice their name followed by a short description (3-4 words) of the task. For example "Johnny... the trash!"
7. Lastly - thank your child for compliance and let them know you are giving them points for completing your request.