

# Following Directions

Understanding directions is an important skill for your child to develop as it enhances their ability to listen and complete tasks they are assigned. Social interaction, behaviour and academic progress depend on the ability to follow and understand directions.

## Tips for practicing following directions

- **Try to eliminate any distractions when working on following directions.**
- **Remember that before your child can give directions they must be able to understand and follow directions.**
- **Start with simple one-step directions.** "Point to the boy."
- **From there, add elements one by one to the direction to increase its difficulty.**
  - **Size:** "Point to the tall boy."
  - **Colour:** "Point to the boy in red."
  - **Action:** "Point to the boy that is jumping."
  - **Location:** "Point to the boy who is behind the chair."
- **Once they can follow directions with different elements added in isolation, try to combine multiple elements in one direction.** Size, action and location: "Point to the tall boy who is jumping behind the chair."
- **Try to give directions that go outside of typical routine. This will ensure that your child is not just following directions by memory and routine and that they actually understand the direction given.** "Put your plate under the table."
- **Once your child is able to understand and follow one-step directions, try to work on sequential directions. Start with two-step directions.** "Put your coat on and get in the car." "Go upstairs and put your toys away." "Get the book and the doll."
- **Once they master two-step directions move on to three step directions and so on.** "Go to your room, get the ball and then bring it to me." "Get the ball, doll and blanket." "Get your cup and put it under the table and put your plate on the couch."
- **After your child understands sequential directions try to incorporate quantity (all, both, some, two etc.) and spatial directions (first, last, between etc.).** "Put all of the dolls between the toy box and toy house."
- **When your child is able to understand following spatial and quantitative directions you can start to incorporate the use of before and after in your directions.** "Before you get the doll, put the ball away. Put your coat on after you put on your boots."
- **Try to ask directions in different ways.**
  - **Use object names:** "Get the movie and popcorn."
  - **Use colour size, function and/or location:** "Get the green one." "Get the big one." "Get the one for sweeping." "Get the one on top of the TV."



## Ideas for working on following directions



- **Play Simon Says:** You can use any level of directions with this game.
  - **One-step directions:** "Touch your head."
  - **Two-step directions:** "Touch your arm and jump around."
  - **Three-step directions:** "Jump, turn around and touch your nose." And so on.

When you start off, you may need to demonstrate the action for your child when you are giving the direction. Make it fun by using your child's favourite character instead of Simon (Spider-man says, Cinderella says, etc.).

- **Barrier games:** To work on following directions, you could each take the same colouring sheet and put a barrier between the two of you so that you cannot see what the other person is doing. Direct your child what to colour. (e.g. "Colour the ball green." "Colour the flower red." "Colour the swing blue.") When you are done, compare pictures to see if they were able to follow the directions. If not, have your child explain his picture and you explain yours.
- **Obstacle course:** Set up a mini obstacle course. Direct your child how to go through the obstacle course. (e.g. "Step on the table, crawl under the chair, run in a circle around the lamp.") You can incorporate two or three-step directions and so on.
- **Treasure hunt:** Hide different items around your living room or throughout the house and have your child go on a treasure hunt. To find each item give them directions as to where an item is. (e.g. "Go upstairs and look behind your bed." "Go to the kitchen and look under the chair.")
- **Flashlight tag:** Turn off the lights in the room. Have a flashlight for yourself and for your child. Direct your child to shine the flashlight on different items. (e.g. "Shine your light on something tall and blue." "Shine your light on the table." "Shine your light on the item beside the TV.")

