

## **Giving Directions Your Child Will Follow**

Parents can prevent some problems from occurring if they learn how to be effective in giving directions. The following are some principles that will help you to give more effective directions to your children.

1. Give one direction at a time. If you give a child too much to do at one time, they most often will not do any of it.
2. Give a clear statement of what is expected. Watch out for the traps of generalizations and the “don’ts”.
3. Phrase your directions in statement form, not as questions or wishes. Children don’t grant wishes, geniuses do!
4. Give enough time for your child to begin to follow your direction. We suggest you count to ten slowly. Older children may need a time limit if the direction is to complete some task.
5. Be sure you have your child’s attention. Do not assume you do. If necessary, move closer, call the child’s name, wait to be acknowledged.
6. Keep your tone of voice firm but calm. Remember you are modeling how to be in control.

\*Below are some suggestions from *The Hidden Hinge*, by Rosa Covington Pakcard, Ballantine Books, 1973.

1. Be objective, not personal in your instructions: “Books go in this bookcase.” rather than “I’d like you to keep your books in the bookcase.”
2. Be positive, not negative: “Use the tricycle, it’s just your size.” rather than “You are too little to ride a bicycle.”
3. Give the social reason for rules rather than flat authority: “Hang the coat up before the baby steps on it and wrinkles it.” rather than: “Hang it up.”
4. Give a solution to the problem rather than mere prohibitions: “Please move to this side of the table, John, so that Mary will be able to see.” rather than “Don’t stand in Mary’s way.”
5. Be specific. Give concrete information using concrete names and commands: “If you hold the card by its edge, it will stay clean.” rather than “Don’t mess up the cards.”
6. Match objects and actions to your words: “Trays (pause and show) are held in the middle (pause and show)” rather than “Do it this way.”
7. Give awareness of consequences: “Hitting hurts Peter” rather than “Don’t hit Peter.”
8. Act as an individual to defend the common law in specific instances: “I will not let you hurt John with a stick.” rather than: “We don’t hurt people.”
9. Recognize the validity of emotions when you limit destructive actions: “I understand you are angry, but you may not hurt Mary.” rather than “Why did you hit Mary, she is your friend.”