

Teach Me What To Do Instead!

Changing the way we speak to children is the first step....

1. *Teach* a child what TO DO instead of *telling* them what not to do.
2. Avoid “I” statements like “I see ...” or “I notice...” and instead say the child’s name or “You...”
3. Clearly and simply state what you expect the child to do OR, better yet, ask an open-ended question to encourage her to think of what to do e.g., “Where do the toys go after you play?” vs. “Put the toys away!”
4. Use positive, descriptive acknowledgement statements (PDA or PDA Plus) while the child is doing the desired behavior, not just after they have done it e.g., “You are cleaning up all the toys you played with!” vs. “You cleaned up your toys!”
Focusing on effort versus outcome may help children develop a growth mindset.

Examples:

Avoid saying	Say/Model	Positive, Descriptive Acknowledgement/ PDA Plus
Don't run!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk Use walking feet How do we cross the street? What is a safe way to do that? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You're holding my hand because you know we are crossing the street and you want to be safe! Thuy, you are walking across the classroom. You are making a safe choice.
Stop climbing!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep your feet on the floor What's a safe way to reach that? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wow! You have both feet on the floor! You are being safe. Juanito, you asked for help to get something. You are being careful. Looks like you are happy about that!
Don't touch that!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look with your eyes What are you supposed to do if you want to touch? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amelia is looking with her eyes. The hamster is safe when you do that. You kept your hands down. You are being respectful.
No yelling!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a calm voice I want to understand you... How can you say that another way? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are using a calm voice! That makes it easier for me to hear what you have to say. You are using a soft voice inside the classroom. How respectful.
Stop whining!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please speak clearly. I'm trying to understand what you are saying...can you tell me another way? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blake, you told me with your words what was wrong. Now I can help you! You used your words. You are excited that I understood! You told me what you needed. Now I can help you!
Don't stand on the chair!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit on the chair What is the safe way to use that? How can you get that safely? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are sitting on the chair. You are being safe. You were responsible when you sat in the chair. Samantha is using the step stool carefully. She looks proud of herself!
Don't hit!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gentle hands Hands are for playing, eating, and hugging Tell her/him how you feel! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you used gentle hands you were being respectful. You used your words to tell her you were mad at her! Now everyone understands you and everyone is safe! You are hugging her. You both look so happy.
No coloring on the wall!!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can color on the paper or the easel. Which do you choose? Where do we color? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You put the paper on the easel. That is being responsible. Wow, you waited for the paper to start painting! You are being so patient, Mariana.
Don't throw your toys!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Play with the toys on the floor Where do the toys go? What's a safe choice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deandre is playing with the toys on the floor. You decided to keep the toys on the table. Now everyone can play!
Stop playing with your food!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a respectful way to eat? First eat, then play! Do you need help or do you want to feed yourself? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are eating all your food! What a healthy girl. Swati, you are feeding yourself. Now we can all eat together! You are almost done eating. You are excited to go play.
That's not safe/respectful/friendly or kind!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a safe/friendly/kind/respectful way to do that? How can you do that in a....way? Show me how to be..... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wow, you were so respectful sitting there waiting for Jose to finish talking before you asked your question! You are being so safe holding those scissors as you walk. When you take turns with Maya like this on the swings, you are being respectful!