



Providing Rule Reminders and Positive Feedback



Providing Reminders:

Children must be able to apply the rules in the context of the classroom activities and routines. It is this application that helps the child be more successful in his or her environment. Teachers can use several key strategies to encourage and remind children to follow the rules.

- Connect children's behavior to the rules: Although a child might be able to recite one of the classroom rules (e.g., follow directions), the teacher might need to provide support to help the child understand how to use the rule in practice.
- Provide pre-corrections: A pre-correction involves reminding a child of appropriate behavior *before* the child can make an error. Pre-corrections can be given to groups of children or individual children.
- Reference the rules: When children are having trouble following a rule, simply reminding them of the rule can be a powerful strategy for helping them understand how to use the rule in the classroom.
- Children should be acknowledged for following the rules during classroom routines and activities, as well as within other school locations. It is important that teachers and all adults in a program are looking for opportunities to talk about the rules. Food service staff, librarians, office staff, administrators, and custodial staff can all comment when children are engaging in expected behaviors throughout the day.



Providing Positive Feedback

In addition to reminders, teachers should provide positive feedback—verbal and non-verbal affirmations—to children when they follow the rules. The purpose of positive feedback is to increase the likelihood that children will engage in appropriate behavior. Children who struggle with the rules need this positive feedback the most. It is important to comment right away when these children follow the rules, no matter how simple it seems. This feedback is critical to their improvement and success.

Research Shows:

- Praise is one of the most effective school-based strategies that teachers can use to decrease problem behavior and increase positive behavior. (Cavanaugh, 2013)
- A general 4:1 ratio of praise to reprimand statements is desirable. Another recommendation is using about six praise statements every 15 minutes. (Myers, Simonsen, & Sugai, 2011; Piscareta, Tincani, Connell, & Axelrod, 2011)

Feedback should be:

- Based on appropriate behavior or on the child's effort towards the appropriate behavior
- Descriptive of the child's desired behavior
- Sincere and conveyed with enthusiasm
- Provided frequently, especially for children who have trouble following the rules
- Individualized based on the child's needs (e.g., visual supports, verbal statements, close proximity) and preferences (e.g., whether the child is comfortable being praised in front of others or prefers private recognition)

The most powerful positive feedback is *behavior-specific praise* or *descriptive praise*—a positive declarative statement directed toward a child or group of children that describes a desirable behavior in specific, observable, and measurable terms. This involves saying the child's name and telling him or her exactly what was done correctly.

Sometimes, teachers must intensify their efforts to offer positive feedback, particularly with children who struggle with the rules. Teachers can acknowledge individual or group progress and success in following classroom rules by:

- Sending a positive note home or making a positive phone call home
- Taking a photo of a child in the act of following a rule and putting it on the wall next to the posted rule
- Writing the child's name, what she or he did, and the date on a handprint or classroom symbol, which is then posted on the wall or a bulletin board
- Giving the child a stamp on her or his hand or a small sticker

Reference:

IRIS Center Peabody College, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN

<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ecbm/cresource>

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