



Follow Directions and Be Prompt

Following directions and being prompt means being aware of boundaries and respecting those limits for the greater good of everyone. When their environment doesn't provide them with rules and boundaries, children often behave inappropriately and become anxious because they don't know what's expected of them. Schools have rules about being on time in order to function as a team. Their rules about promptness help keep the school running efficiently, as do your directions to be "on time", the respectful and responsible habit you want your child to practice.

Children learn to care for others by being cared for themselves, and they learn to respect others by being respected themselves. Parents can build their child's trust by

helping him learn to make decisions, follow directions, and accept the consequences of his choices.

Rules are important guidelines that help people live orderly lives in a comfortable society. When children develop the habit of being on time, for example,

that behavior becomes routine, and they practice doing so without having to be told. In fact, they may even encourage you to be on time! They take personal responsibility for their actions... and like the good feeling it gives them and others!

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Encourage promptness.** To survive in today's world, children must have a sense of time, but awareness of time is a programmed skill that is most easily learned after the age of 6 years. Use a single-ring timer to help your child develop a sense of time. Set the timer for 5 minutes, if you want your child to stop or start a behavior in that amount of time, for example
- **Reinforce following directions.** Praise your child's following your directions and being on time. Use this simple opportunity: When you say that it's time for dinner, thank your child for coming to the kitchen when you ask.
- **Give positive directions to guide your child's behavior, such as: "Please talk to your brother nicely" and "Please ask permission before you go outside to play."** These are more likely to become positive habits when they are practiced each day.
- **Always give directions that tell your child what you want him to do, rather than what you don't want him to do.** For example, say, "Please ask an adult to hold your hand before going across the street", instead of saying, "Don't cross the street alone."
- Teach your child to follow your directions by asking him to tell you what the directions are for crossing the street, for example.

