

Praise/Recognition

Kids often get a lot of their parent’s attention by misbehaving. One way to improve kids’ behavior is to make sure parents give lots of attention to their kids when they are behaving well. We call this “Catch them being good!” One of the best ways to give attention for good behavior is to comment on it.

Tips for recognizing or praising positive behaviors:

- Say something right away if you can. The sooner the praise is given, the more effective it is.
- Be specific about what you liked. “Johnny, I like how you put away your dishes” is better than “Good job.”
- Show warmth. A touch on the shoulder, eye contact, a smile, enthusiasm all make your praise more powerful.
- Avoid giving “back-handed” praise. This is where you praise good behavior but then follow it with something like “why can’t you do that more often?” Staying purely positive is key.
- Focus on effort/behaviors they can control. “You worked very hard on that homework, I’m proud of you” is better than “You’re the best/smartest.” Also avoid focusing too much on physical characteristics like “You’re the prettiest”.

Find and praise “positive opposite” behaviors:

Use praise whenever you see your child being good. But one powerful way to get rid of problem behaviors is to praise the behavior you WISH your child did instead of the problem behavior, in the situations where you usually see problem behavior. For example, if the problem behavior is a child refusing to start their homework, the positive opposite might be starting homework right away when asked. If the behavior you wish for is something your child never does on their own, you may need to teach them the new behavior, be clear about what you expect from them in those situations, or praise small steps in the direction of the behavior you want.

Problem Behavior Examples	Positive Opposite Examples
Arguing when told to do homework	Doing homework when asked without arguing
Not cleaning out/putting away backpack when home from school	Empty out backpacks/put away items when home from school
Forgets/leaves behind essential items for after school activities	Is prepared with essential items for after school activities

Write down the top problem behaviors below on the left. Then, come up with “positive opposites” to praise on the right.

Problem behaviors	Positive opposite behaviors

Praise plan for this week

Positive opposite behaviors I will look for to praise: 1. 2. 3.
Specific situations I will look for this positive opposite: 1. 2. 3.
Any reminders or support I will use to make sure I follow through:
Possible challenges or obstacles that might come up & how I will overcome:

Track how it went!

Date							
Did I do it?							
How did it go?							

For review next week: Did the frequency of the problem behavior or positive opposite you worked on using praise seem to change?