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Positive Instructions

Switching from "Don't" to "Do"

MORE 

"No..." "Don't..."
"Stop..."

One of the most common kinds of instructions parents give to their children is a negative **"don't"** instruction:

"Don't go near the TV",

"Don't hit your sister"

"Don't throw your food on the floor"



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...but “don’t” instructions are ineffective because they focus your child on the negative behaviour, and tell them **nothing about what they can do instead** or how to behave correctly.



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For example, if you say:

**"Don't go near
the TV"**

This immediately focuses your child on the TV and acts almost like a suggestion. It may even make the behaviour more attractive than before.



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You are also more likely to give “don’t” instructions angrily, and this sets up the expectation that your child is about to misbehave.



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All negative instructions can be turned into more positive "do"s...

"Don't shout at me"



"Keep your voice down,
and tell me how
you are feeling"

"Don't hurt
your little brother"



"Please look after
your little brother"

"Don't run off "



"Please stay
beside me"



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If you say "no" or "don't", you can follow this up with a **positive instruction**.

"No hitting . . . **tell me how you are feeling**"

"Don't draw on the table
...**come here and I'll help you draw on the paper**"



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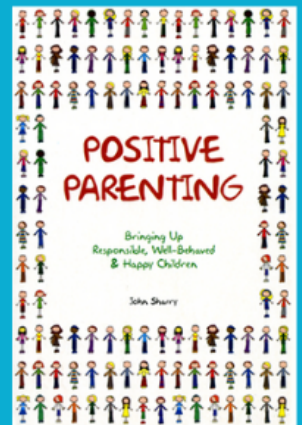
Positive instructions:

- ✓ focus your child on the **behaviour you want to see**
- ✓ help you keep **calm**
- ✓ are more **effective**



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More in my 'Positive Parenting'
book and the evidence-based
Parents Plus programmes.



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