

RAISING CHILDREN

<http://www.raisingchildren.net.au>

This website has a wealth of information including tips and tricks on the sometimes difficult task of raising children. We urge all parents to take some time to look at the information provided.

No matter how old your children are, your praise and encouragement will help them feel good about themselves. This boosts their self-esteem and confidence. Sometimes rewards can be useful too, especially if you want to encourage good behaviour.

Encouragement

Encouragement is praise for effort – for example, ‘You worked hard on that maths homework’. Praising effort can encourage your child to try hard in the future – it’s very motivating. But you can also use encouragement before and during an activity to help your child do the activity or behaviour. For example, ‘Show me how well you can put your toys away’ or ‘I know you’re nervous about the test, but you’ve studied hard. No matter how it turns out, you’ve done your best’.

Some children, especially those who are less confident, need more encouragement than others. When praise is encouraging and focused on effort, children are more likely to see trying hard as a good thing in itself. They’re also more likely to keep trying and to be optimistic when they face challenges.

Rewards

A reward is a consequence of good behaviour. It’s a way of saying ‘well done’ after your child has done something good or behaved well. It could be a treat, a surprise or an extra privilege. For example, as a reward for keeping his room tidy, you might let your child choose what’s for dinner. Rewards can make your praise and encouragement work better. Most behaviour is influenced by the consequences that follow it, so when you praise your child’s behaviour and then reward it, the behaviour is more likely to happen again.

Rewards can work well at first, but it’s best not to overuse them. If you need to use them a lot, it might help to rethink the situation – are there any other strategies that you could try to encourage the behaviour you want? Or is the task or behaviour too hard for your child right now?

Note that bribery and rewards aren’t the same. A bribe is given before the behaviour you want, and a reward is given after. Rewards reinforce good behaviour, but bribes don’t.

Sometimes it’s easier to criticise than it is to compliment. Bad behaviour is often more obvious than good behaviour – for example, you’re more likely to notice when your child is yelling than you are to notice when your child is quietly reading a book. Try to pay attention to the good behaviour too!

Tips for using praise, encouragement and rewards

Help build your child’s self-esteem and encourage good behaviour with these tips:

- **When you feel good about your child, say so.** See if you can give your child some words of encouragement every day. The small things you say can build up over time to have a big effect on your child.
- **Try to praise more than you criticise.** As a guide, try to praise your child six times for every one time you say something negative.
- When you feel good about your child, say so. See if you can give your child some words of encouragement every day. The small things you say can build up over time to have a big effect on your child.
- **Look for little changes and successes.** Rather than waiting until your child has done something perfectly to give a compliment, try to praise any effort or improvement. To give a compliment, try to praise any effort or improvement.
- **Accept that everyone’s different.** Praise your child for their unique strengths and encourage them to develop and feel excited about their particular interests. This will help them develop a sense of pride and confidence.
- **Surprise your child with a reward for good behaviour.** For example, ‘Thanks for picking up the toys – let’s go to the park to celebrate’.
- **Praise effort as well as achievement.** Recognise and praise how hard your child is trying – for example, ‘You worked really hard on that essay’ or ‘Thank you for remembering to hang your coat on the peg’.
- **Try to make your praise dependent on your child’s behaviour,** rather than your feelings. You might find that the more you look for good behaviour to praise, the more positive you’ll feel (and the more good behaviour you’ll see).

*Ideas are funny little things.
They won't work unless you do.*