WHAT IS IT?

Effective commands are *simple* and *clear* directives given to increase students' compliance when choice is not an option. They obtain students' attention, provide only one directive at a time, and are stated specifically, positively, and assertively.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Jayden is excited in his play and is starting to talk too loudly. His teacher walks to over to him, kneels down, and makes eye contact. In a calm, firm tone she says, "Jayden, please use your inside voice. It is one of our classroom rules."

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

There are many reasons why a student may not comply with a directive. For example, they may…

- Not be paying attention
- Not hear or realize the command was directed toward them
- Think the command is optional (*"Are you ready to put the blocks away?"*)
- Have trouble understanding or remembering the command

Using effective commands is important because you are making sure that your directive is clear, while emphasizing that it is *not* optional.

Ineffective vs. Effective Commands

The way that you give a command can make a big difference in students' likelihood of following directives. Commands are "effective" when they …

☑ **Grab students' attention**

It's hard for students to comply with your directive when they didn't hear it or realize you were talking to them. Avoid this problem by making sure you are <u>close</u>, <u>at face-level</u> (i.e., kneel or bend down), and making <u>eye contact</u> whenever you give a command.

☑ **Include only *one* step**

When commands are too complicated or have too many steps, students have a hard time remembering what's expected of them. Limit commands to only **one** directive at a time.

☑ **Are stated in a way that is specific, positive, and assertive**

Often times, students may not fully understand what it is that you expect of them. Make sure that your command is specific, given as a statement, and tells them what *to do* rather than what *not* to do.

- **Specific**: "<u>It's clean-up time! Put the blocks in the box.</u>" *Instead of* "It's clean-up time!"
- **Assertive**: "<u>Okay, please go inside now.</u>" *Instead of* "Are you ready to go inside?"
- **Positive**: "<u>Walk, please!</u>" *Instead of* "Stop running!"

TIPS FOR USING EFFECTIVE COMMANDS

1. **BEFORE giving a command, make sure that you have students' attention by…**
   - ☑ Standing close to them.
   - ☑ Being at their face-level (i.e., squat, kneel, bend down).
   - ☑ Making eye contact.

2. **WHEN giving a command, make sure that your command…**
   - ☑ Includes only *one* step at a time.
   - ☑ Tells students what *to* do (instead of what *not* to do).
   - ☑ Is given as a statement (not a question).
   - ☑ Is stated in a firm, yet warm tone.

3. **AFTER giving a command, make sure to allow enough time (5-10 seconds) to respond.**
   - ☑ If your student complies → Immediately reinforce!
   - ☑ If your student does not respond or comply → Repeat the command *one* time.
     - If your student *still* does not follow through, give an appropriate consequence.
     - Make sure the consequence does not involve escape from compliance. Hold the student accountable for completing what you are asking of them, even if they must eventually return to it later to do so.

4. **Give the student another chance to be successful as soon as possible!**
   - ☑ Remember to praise or otherwise reinforce the student for their display of positive behavior.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT USING EFFECTIVE COMMANDS

Communication is the Key

Available as PDF

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