



Shoalhaven Managing Children Program (SMCP)

10. Using reminders to get cooperation

There are all sorts of reasons why children don't do what they are asked.

Young children can become so caught up in what they are doing that they forget what they have been told. They can also get confused if they are not sure what you want, or if the task is hard for them.

A reminder helps to break a sequence of uncooperative behaviour by reminding your child of your instruction, and cuing the child to desirable behaviour.

You can repeat the instruction if your child has forgotten what you asked.

If your child appears unsure, break down the instruction in a simpler form, e.g.:

If your child didn't respond when asked to get ready for dinner, give a simpler instruction ("[Name], come here.")

When your child comes, praise cooperation ("That's good. You came when I called you.")

Then repeat the original instruction ("Now go to the bathroom and wash your hands.")

Important:

1. The most important part of the reminder strategy is to praise your child when he or she starts to cooperate with what you asked.
2. Use a reminder only once, or at most twice, in a situation. Any more and it can easily turn into nagging. Then your child may learn to take no notice of what you say, and respond only when you lose your temper. That would be bad for both of you.

Interrupt/Remind. If your child is too excited or self-absorbed to pay attention to a reminder, you can gently get the child's attention by using 'interrupt/remind'.

The 'interrupt' could be to touch your child gently on the shoulder, or to turn the child towards you to get the child's attention, or by removing some object or toy.

Then repeat the instruction.

Stay calm and speak quietly to your child. If you get excited or upset, that will only get your child more stirred up.