



13. Praise and encourage cooperative behaviour

Why praise?

- The more time children spend doing good things, the less time they can spend doing bad ones.
- So the best way to reduce your child's unacceptable behaviour is to increase his or her good behaviour. The way to do that is by letting your child know what behaviour pleases you.
- Praise gives your child important feedback about how to behave.
- Praise motivates your child to want to please you by doing good things.

How to praise

When your child does what you ask, praise what the child did. Try to use lots of **labelled praise**. This is when you tell your child exactly what he or she did that pleased you. For example:

- "That's great. You did what I asked you and you did it straight away."
- "You made a really good job of ..."
- "That's good you are playing so quietly."

It helps your child to learn the right thing to do.

Other kinds of praise are

- **unlabelled praise** ("That's great", "Well done", "Good boy" etc.) and
- **non-verbal praise** (cuddles, kisses, smiles, winks, high fives, etc.)

Labelled praise and non-verbal praise are the most effective kinds of praise. Too much use of "good boy" can quickly turn into empty words.

Some behaviours to praise

Sometimes parents find it hard to find anything to praise in what their children are doing. A child may not get it right even when he or she tries. At these times, parents need to see the good things the child has done, or even the fact that the child was trying to do the right thing.

Here are some suggestions for using **labelled praise** to change your child's behaviour and help your child learn new skills.

- **Doing what you asked.** This is the most important single piece of labelled praise and always useful when your child cooperates.
- **Shaping (See Tip 11 - Teaching Your Child New Skills)** sitting skills: sitting quietly, sitting up straight, sitting still, sitting at the table
- **Shaping (See Tip 11 - Teaching Your Child New Skills)** play skills: playing quietly, playing carefully, playing gently, playing imaginatively
- Trying hard
- Doing a good job
- Sharing toys
- Letting you play with her/him
- Waiting his/her turn
- Waiting for you (before starting to do it)
- Doing something by her/himself
- Having good ideas
- Talking quietly
- Talking politely
- Helping you
- Letting you help her/him
- Cleaning up/putting toys away
- Trying something new
- Good imagination
- Good manners (saying please and thank you)
- Good building/catching/throwing/playing etc.
- Artistic (good drawing)
- Musical (good singing/playing/clapping etc.)
- Knowing something (poem, song, ABC's, colours, numbers etc.)