

# Focus on DO

[fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/](http://fyi.uwex.edu/parentingthepreschooler/)

## Reinforce Good Behavior

- Use positive words with children: like “do” instead of “do not” and “yes” instead of “no.”
- Try a change of “scenery” to show a preschooler where a behavior is allowed. For example, move a child doing somersaults in a crowded room to a more spacious area.
- Set children up for success by reminding them of expectations, such as chores.
- Use “teaching” do messages. Rather than yelling, “Don’t slam the door!” say “Do close the door tightly.”
- Remain calm - breathe deeply and think about how to reframe preschooler’s behavior.



Photograph by Paula Cartwright



Photograph by Jenette Gunville

## Keep a positive focus

- When adults focus and comment on negative behaviors, children often act out in response.
- Stop the cycle by focusing on positive behaviors you want to see instead of the negative behaviors you don’t want to see. Change your “don’t” into a “do!”

## Benefits of using DO vs. DON'T:

- ◆ Focusing on positive behavior leads to more positive behaviors.
- ◆ Adults have fewer power struggles with children.
- ◆ Children view themselves as capable and successful.
- ◆ Parents have a more positive and healthy relationship with their child.



Photograph by Christa Thao

## Why do instead of don't?

- Children need to obey adults to stay safe from people or things that may be harmful; stop hurtful behavior; and cooperate in family life.
- Preschoolers struggle to stop a behavior once they hear it described. For instance, a preschooler who hears, "Do not eat the candy" will only be able to think about eating the candy.
- Help children obey by telling them what they should be doing instead of what they should not be doing.
- Children respond positively when adults focus on the positive rather than the negative. Tell children what is expected, when, and how.

## Different DO's

There are two different types of do's:

- 1) Teaching DO's give instructions to children. Use this type of message to teach your child what to do. For example, instead of saying "Don't slam the door," a DO would say "Do close the door quietly."
- 2) Redirection DO's can be used to distract a child. Rather than saying DON'T to the current activity, offer the child another, more acceptable activity. For example, instead of saying "Don't color on my magazine," say "Here is a piece of paper you can color on."

## UW-Extension Family Living Programs

"Raising Kids, Eating Right, Spending Smart, Living Well"



For more information, please contact your county UW-Extension office:

<http://counties.uwex.edu/>

[Link To References](#)

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