

# Listen, Think, and Do

## Learning to follow directions

“Please wait.” “Eat your spaghetti with your fork.” “Give your friend a turn.” Learning the skills to follow directions helps children learn to behave nicely with others.

### The Basics

Babies can be good at following simple directions, like “give the ball to mama”. Young children need to develop many skills to be good at following more complicated directions. They need to be able to listen. They need to be able understand what they are being told and remember each of the steps. And they need to have the right skills to be able to do what was asked.

At the same time that children are learning to follow directions, they are also building their independence. They are testing their ability to do things their own way. So they might not always want to follow your directions!

### Note

Supplies that are underlined can be found in your kit.

### Things to Try with Ages 2 to 5

#### Twirl, dance, and freeze

- Wave a scarf high above your head. Invite your child to copy you. Then shake it low down by your toes. Let them copy you again. Do one movement at a time. Try clapping, jumping, or twirling. Then let your child be the leader.
- Do two movements at the same time for your child to copy. Wave the scarf high above your head and jump. Or wave it while you twirl. Do the actions quickly or slowly. Add music and encourage your child to follow your moves. Take turns being the leader!
- Play a game of “freeze dance”. Explain the directions. When the music starts, everyone dances. When the music stops, everyone freezes and stays as still as they can.

### Getting Started

It is easier to follow directions when the directions are clear. Use words your child will understand. “Put your blocks on the shelf.” Let your child finish one task before giving directions for another task. Learning to follow directions takes practice and lots of patience!



More! 

## Things to Try with Ages 2 to 5

### Obstacle course

- Line up three pillows or other soft objects on the floor to make a simple physical challenge for your child. “Crawl from the first pillow to the second pillow. Then from the second pillow to the third pillow.” Try “walking like a cat” or “hopping like a rabbit” or “slithering like a snake”.
- Combine a few challenges together to make an obstacle course. Use something to jump over, like pillows. Add something to crawl under, like a chair or table. And add something to go around, like stuffed animals. Give clear directions. Then... “Ready, get set, go!” Change the order of the challenges and try again.
- Go outside! Draw an obstacle course using sidewalk chalk. Make lines to walk on, circles to jump to, spirals to twirl on, and more. Try the obstacle course while walking, running, or hopping. Give clear directions each time.



## Everyday Interactions

Cook or bake together. Read each direction in the recipe aloud. Ask your child to help you figure out what it means. Then do it together.

Children love being helpful. Give them a helping job with a specific direction. “Put the forks on the table for dinner, please.”

## Model, Notice, Practice

**“You want me to line up the blocks like train tracks? Good idea! I will do that.”**

Model following directions—even some that your child gives you!

**“I like the way you brushed your teeth. You put the toothpaste on the brush first.”**

Notice when your child is following directions. Name what they did well.

**“Please put your blocks in the bin.” ... “Oops! You put your blocks in a pile on the floor. Try again.”**

Learning to follow directions takes practice. Try not to get upset. Sometimes your child is doing their best!