

Compliance & Instructional Control

Is This For You?

Does your child ignore you when you ask them to do something?

Do they engage in a challenging behaviour instead?

Do you spend a lot of time arguing, negotiating, or compromising with your child?



If you answered yes to any of the above questions, please read this handout to learn how to build instructional control and compliance with your child!

Definitions

Compliance: When a child engages in a response that matches the delivered instruction

Example: You tell the child to sit down, and he/she follows your instruction and sits down.

Everyday you ask your child to complete various tasks (E.g. clean up the toys, sit at the table, put their coat on, etc). If you find yourself constantly negotiating and compromising with your child to complete simple requests, it may be because you lack instructional control.

Instructional Control: Creating a positive relationship with a child where the parent has established and built leadership control (Mrs. P's Specialties, n.d.). Having instructional control with your child represents the probability that your delivered instruction will lead to the desired response from the child (Schramm, 2017). Instructional control is what motivates your child to listen to you and do what you ask (Meadows, 2015).

Positive Reinforcement: The presentation of something immediately following a response, which **increases** the likelihood that the response will occur again in the future (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Example: Giving the child her favourite toy because she put on her coat independently.

Positive Behaviour → Give Reward → Increases Similar Future Responses

Why is it Important?

Without compliance and instructional control, it may be difficult for you to make requests to your child, such as asking him/her to get dressed, sit down for dinner time, or clean up his/her toys. Increasing your instructional control with your child can increase your child's likelihood to respond appropriately to these everyday requests, without engaging in challenging behaviours.

Six Steps to Building Instructional Control

1. Identify Your Child's Reinforcers

Reinforcers: Something presented after a response/behaviour that **increases** the likelihood the response/behaviour will occur again in the future (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Example: A favourite toy is the reinforcer when the child gets dressed independently.

- Choose a reward that is easy to control (eliminate the tug of war)

- Ultimate goal: pick a reward that the child obtains through you: the child should want you because you are the “giver of good things”.

2. Pairing With Your Child

Pairing: A technique to help form and maintain rapport with a child by combining (i.e. pairing) the learning environment and the parent with reinforcers (items you are already established to be rewarding) (Evenstad, Flynn-Privett, & Gudding, n.d.).

The child should learn that you have access to all of his/her favourite things and you will give them over without requiring anything in return. Pairing activities should be led by the child’s motivation.

Procedure:

(Evenstad, Flynn-Privett, & Gudding, n.d.)

1. Collect multiple strong reinforcers that you know your child enjoys
2. Provide the child with access to these reinforcers (through you), without placing any demands
3. Have fun playing! Be silly and fun! Follow your child’s lead.
4. *Comment* on the child’s play
(E.g. “There goes the car! So fast!”)

Tip

Do not ask the child questions or place demands at this stage (E.g. “What colour car is that?”/”Where will the car go?”). Although these questions are intended to engage the child in play, refrain from asking them. From your child’s perspective, answering these questions may seem like a lot of work, even though it may not seem so to you.

See the “Pairing Handout” for more information

3. Show Your Child That Following Your Instructions is to His/Her Benefit

Once your child is happily and willingly approaching you and plays with the toys without hesitation, you can begin to introduce demands (Evenstad, Flynn-Privett, & Gudding, n.d.)! Start by asking your child to complete simple tasks that you know they will be successful with, because they have frequently complied with these request in the past.

Once the child complies with your request, provide **lots of praise and reinforcement!** The more opportunities your child is exposed to the pattern where he/she has to first follow a direction before gaining access to something he/she wants, the child will learn through repetition that compliance is the best way to get what he/she desires (Schramm, n.d.).

The initial instructions you are giving your child can even be delivered in a way where the child is already beginning to complete the action and then you deliver your instruction to ensure follow through.

For example, you see your child begin to put a block on a tower. Just before he/she puts the block on, deliver your instruction, "Put the block on". When the child follows through, provide praise and reinforcement.

Tip

Watch your wording- provide clear instructions and do not phrase your instruction as a question, phrase it as a statement!

Do not give the child the opportunity to say "No" to your request.

Example:

Parent: "Can you sit down?"

Child: "No"

Parent: "Sit Down" (Same request rephrased as a statement)

4. Introduce Foundational Skills (Demands)

Slowly start to introduce demands in play:

- E.g. Give me a ball, put it over here, put it in, etc
- Give instructions about 25% of the time, so you do not overwhelm the child
- Continue to deliver easy requests to the child, so he/she will be able to follow through, then **reinforce** the child for complying

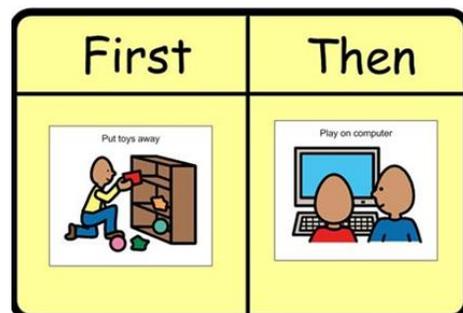
When delivering your instruction, you can also use "**First-Then**" language. A visual outlining this expectation can also be created (see below).

First: (non-preferred task),

Then: (preferred activity/item)

Examples

- First put the ball over there, then we can watch a video
- First sit down, then you can have a Skittle
- Put all the shapes in, then you can listen to music



5. Reinforce Compliance

In the early stages of gaining instructional control, reinforce **every** correct response! Deliver reinforcement **quickly** right after he/she has complied. You can use reinforcement by giving the child a favourite activity/toy/food, as well as praise after he/she complies with your instruction. Every time you reinforce a behaviour, you are telling the child that this behaviour is something you want to see again (Schramm, n.d.)!

Be consistent: your child must understand that certain behavior choices result in him/her getting access to reinforcement. Over time, your child will learn that it is in his/her best interest to listen to and comply with your requests (Schramm, n.d.).

Once you have gained instructional control with your child, you can slowly begin to fade (i.e. reduce) the amount of reinforcement the child receives for complying with your request. Rather than every single response resulting in reinforcement, you can average it out to every 2-3 responses (Schramm, n.d.). Always continue to praise your child for positive behaviours!

6. Show the Child Ignoring/Not Complying to Your Instructions ≠ Reinforcement

If your child does not comply with your request/instruction, do not provide reinforcement until they comply with your initial request. You will learn to reliably identify when your child is engaging in challenging behaviour and intentionally make that behaviour unsuccessful (Schramm, n.d.).

Example: If you told your child, “First clean up your toys, and then you get the iPad”, do not give the child the iPad until they have cleaned up their toys. Be consistent and remain firm with your expectations!

References

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