

## How to Give Clear Directions in Tutoring Sessions

### **Effective Behavior Management Is About Getting Pupils to Follow Your Instructions Every Time**

The ability to follow verbal directions is essential for success in school. Some individuals have a natural talent for remaining on task and focused when all around them there appears to be distraction and interruption. However, this is certainly not the case for all pupils. If your directions or instructions are not effectively delivered, with clarity and structure, there will be a number of pupils who will simply not have “taken in” the instruction or will have only caught part of the information. Failure to hear or understand your directions will inevitably lead to one or more unwanted outcomes:

- Failure to comply.
- The need to use reminders, reprimands and/or sanctions.
- Arguments.
- Frustration (for you and your pupil!).
- Anger.

#### Support students in becoming effective listeners by using these simple methods:

Tutors should plan and deliver a specific direction in much the same manner as you deliver a part of the curriculum. Use your well-rehearsed and understood cues and techniques for attracting the attention of the individual or class group. These should be used in a consistent manner, don't be tempted to use one technique at the start of the lesson and then keep changing throughout the duration. Choose a technique that works and works. For example:

To attract the attention of a group, try clapping your hands once while saying “thanks folks!” Ensure you teach the meaning of the technique to the pupils. “Thanks folks,” means:

1. Put everything down.
2. Stop talking
3. Look at me and listen

Once you have given your specific instruction, it is important to follow up with a structured teaching model that addresses the needs of all learning styles:

- \*Gain the attention of the group or individual.
- \*State your instruction/direction clearly.
- \*Check for understanding by asking questions related to instruction.
- \*Try to role play with the group (for practice).

\*Repeat as necessary.

Simply stopping the class and giving a verbal direction will invariably prove ineffective. As the group becomes accustomed to your expectations and routines, the need to use the model will reduce.

It may also be helpful as a reminder to yourself as to what should be included in specific directions. The main elements may well change depending on the situation.

The components of the direction should include:

- \*The materials needed to complete the task.
- \*Whether pupils should be in or out of their seats.
- \*The appropriate noise level for the session.

For other situations, the directions will change but the same format model should remain. For example:

Tutor-led session:

1. You only need paper and a pencil to complete the worksheet.
2. Stay in your own seat for the duration of the activity.
3. Used a quiet raised hand to ask questions. Speak one at a time.

For a discussion session:

1. No materials needed.
2. Stay in your seat.
3. Speak one at a time and remember to listen to others.

Being clear with your instructions and expectations will reduce the likelihood of ongoing disruption and interruptions. If you are aware of particular pupils who have difficulty listening to and following directions, it is also worthwhile to consider where you are standing when giving the directions to the group. Close proximity to the target pupil and using his or her name will give more opportunities for engagement with the activity.

Remember to ensure your instructions are clear and can be observed- avoid comments such as “come on now!” or “right let’s get busy now!”

Once the instructions have been given, questions have been answered and the activity practiced, scan the group and circulate, look for the pupil who is complying and make a positive comment about those who are following directions.

More tips on how to give effective directions in class:

1. Have the child make eye contact with you before giving directions. If eye contact is not achieved, gently turn the child's face towards you before speaking. Many ADD children in highly distractible situations benefit from having physical contact of the tutor's hand resting on their shoulder while verbal instructions are given.

2. Help children become more effective listeners by setting a purpose for listening. Tell the children what to listen for. For example, "Listen while I give you directions for your spelling paper," or "listen while I review three phonics rules with you."

3. Make directions clear and simple, do not give multiple requests. Since some children have difficulty processing a series of auditory commands, the student should hear one direction at a time. Instead of saying, "Put away your Math book and open your language arts book to page 40," break the task into several segments and say, "Put away your Math book (pause), now take your language arts book (pause). Turn to page 63."