



Building Blocks

for Parents

Praise

**A Child Management Technique
Home and Community Treatment Project
Mendota Mental Health Institute
Madison, Wisconsin**

What:

Praise is a way of saying, "I like what you did!" The message can be a word, a phrase, a gesture or a facial expression that makes another person feel pride, joy, or respected. Praise creates a sense of well-being in a person.

When or Where:

When we see a child trying to do something that we want him to repeat as a regular part of his behavior, praise is called for. You might praise cooperative play, thoughtfulness, respect for others, handling pets gently, remembering a chore by himself. Whatever the event, praise should follow immediately.

Examples:

How Not To: The positive value of praise can be lost if negative comments or comparisons are part of or follow the praise statement:

1. "For such a little boy, you did very well." (Child thinks: "I really am skinny.")
2. "I'm glad you remembered to feed the dog tonight. I hope you don't forget to do it tomorrow." (Child thinks: "Gee, I'm stupid.")
3. "Well, now you look like a human being with your hair cut." (Child thinks: "I'm a dirty animal.")

How to: Praise should be related to the event, not the child's total character. Here are examples of praise that focus on an event; each is followed by a description of the good feeling the praise gives the child.

1. "I'm glad you remembered your school books this morning; that was good thinking." (Child thinks: "I can think for myself.")
2. "The yard looks just great. You sure did a nice job cleaning up the trash and raking the leaves. It looks like a different place." (Child thinks: "I am strong. I am a hard worker.")
3. (To child trying, but not managing to tie shoes:) "Boy, you sure gave those old laces a workout. Learning to tie your shoes is hard. I'm glad you tried them by yourself this morning. (Child thinks: "I tried and I bet I can do better tomorrow.")
4. "I see that you included Billy in your ball game. That's nice. Sometimes younger children feel left out. I'll bet you made him happy by asking him to join the game. (Child thinks: "I can make people feel good.")

At first, parents may feel uncomfortable in giving such direct praise. If so, ask yourself: Does the child know you are pleased? Don't you think the child should know? You might wonder, "Why should I praise him for something I expect him to do?" Well, you, Mom, are expected to cook for your family, but it is sure nice to have someone comment on how good your cooking is, or understand how hard and long you have worked on a meal, isn't it? A child, too, needs to know that he is appreciated.

Spec: 45bb112480; GA 9233, 1 of 2/4-91.

Distributed by Early ACCESS/Early Childhood Services, Grant Wood Area Education Agency, 4401 Sixth Street SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404-4499



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Ways to Compliment Children

General

Much better.
That's right.
Great.
How about that.
Fine.
You are 100 percent correct.
Beautiful.
Perfect.
The girls (or boys) won.
You get a star today.
Wonderful.
Marvelous.
That's just so.
Stupendous.
Well, I should say so.
Congratulations.
I'm pleased.
You're sharp today.
You can be proud of yourself.
I am proud of you.
Fantastic.
Outstanding.
Good progress.
Good thinking.
Groovy.
Bravo.
Righto.
You really used your brain.
Now you're cooking.
Now you're on the ball.
You're on the right track.
Splendid.
Tremendous.
Lovely.
Superb.
That's cool.
That's neat.
It's a pleasure to work with you.
You really used your brain.
Now you're cooking.
Now you're on the ball.
You're on the right track.
Splendid.
Tremendous.
Lovely.
Superb.
That's cool.
That's neat.
It's a pleasure to work with you.
You really look grown up.
I knew you could do that well.
This is the greatest.
Susie has her thinking cap on today.
Say, you're on the ball.

Specific

Good sharing your tricycle.
You're doing a good job of waiting in line.
Nice waiting.
Good walking.
Good, you did what I asked you to do.
You're being very careful while riding your bike.
Excellent answer.
You did that just right.
I like that -- that's well thought out.
You have been such helpful workers.
That deserves an A.
That's good planning for having a pet.
Right you are.
That is certainly so.
You are a careful thinker; you think before you speak.
You couldn't have said or done it better.
It looks like you're putting some thought and time on this.
You remembered all the rules. I'm proud of you.
Thank you for listening to my question. 'It's nice to see you helping each other.
You are good listeners.
You are a nice class.
We had a good day.
I like the way you are working.
Good work.
I like it when you look at me while I'm talking to you.
I like such pleasant conversations with you.
That's good table manners to wipe your mouth with your napkin.
You did a good job of handling your anger at that frustrating work.
Thank you for doing more of the clean-up of your room than you had to.
You really did a fine job of playing with the little kids.