

POSITIVE COMMUNICATION WORKSHEET



Don't expect fully formed positive communications to spring from your lips spontaneously. Like any new skill, it will probably feel awkward at first. Start by writing down what you want to say. Rehearse, fine-tune, role-play with someone else to see how it goes before you go live. Use this exercise to plan a request you would like to make of your child.

Step 1:

Write out your request, as you'd usually say it.

Step 2:

Now modify your request according to the seven elements of positive communication.

Be Positive. Tell your child what you want him to do rather than what you *don't* want him to do.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>Stop leaving your clothes on the floor.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>Please put your clothes in the hamper.</i>
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Your positive request:

Be Brief. Only one request at a time, and stick to your point. (No: “and another thing...!”)

<u>First Try:</u> <i>I want you to do a better job of cleaning up - your room is a mess, and your clothes are everywhere. You're driving me crazy.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I would like you to pick up your clothes.</i>
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Your brief, positive request:

Be Specific. Make sure you are clear about your request.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>Just be tidier with your clothes!</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>Put your clothes in the hamper.</i>
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Your specific, brief, positive request:

Label your feelings. Identify a feeling and describe it without being too intense or lengthy. Bonus points for also including a positive feeling.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>It makes me crazy how little you seem to care about things!</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I feel frustrated when I come home and see clothes lying around. I'd really appreciate your help in this.</i>
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Your feeling(s) labeled:

Offer an understanding statement. Use this strategy to help your child feel heard and non-defensive.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>I'm not asking anything of you that I don't ask of everyone else; we all chip in.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I know you feel rushed to get to your practice and don't think you have time to deal with your clothes.</i>
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Your understanding statement:

Take partial responsibility. This is not saying it's your fault, but it's helpful to find a piece of the problem, however small, that you can share.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>It's not my job to be your maid!</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>I realize I haven't told you how much it bothers me. I can't expect you to read my mind.</i>
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Your acceptance of partial responsibility:

Offer to help. See if there is anything you can do to help your child achieve your request.

<u>First Try:</u> <i>You're going to have to grow up sooner or later.</i>	<u>Modified:</u> <i>Would it help to have an extra hamper in your room so you don't have to go to the laundry room?</i>
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Your offer to help:

Now try putting it all together. You can play with the order and wording to make it sound as natural as possible. Keep in mind that even the most perfectly scripted request won't guarantee the outcome you want. It will, however, increase the odds of being heard.

Tips for practice:

1. Start with small-ticket items that are less important; also start by practicing in the context of safer or easier relationships (practice with your husband or sister instead of your child).
2. You don't need to use all seven steps in every interaction. (Though trying all of them, at least for practice, can help you get the hang of it.)
3. Watch the timing of when you deliver your request. It should not be when your child is under the influence or hung over, and you both should be in reasonably good moods and not rushing off somewhere.
4. Try not to get discouraged if it doesn't go so well the first few, or many, times. It takes effort and practice to get out of negative ruts. We believe—because research shows—it's worth it.