

Children's Speech and Language Service

Praise

How praise works

- Praise is when you tell your child what you like about her or her behaviour. Praise helps your child's self-esteem, confidence and self-motivation.
- By using praise, you're showing your child how to think and talk positively about themselves and helping your them learn how to recognise when he / she does well.

Using specific praise

- Specific praise is when you tell your child exactly what it is that you like. For example, *'I like the way made that house using the bricks'*.
- This is more effective then general praise like *'You're a good boy'*. As it lets them know specifically what they have done well.
- You can't give too much praise. But praise can lose its impact if it isn't specific.
- If you use it when your child hasn't done anything. This might teach your child that she doesn't have to do anything to be praised.

Using praise to change behaviour

- Children are more likely to repeat behaviour that earns praise. This means you can use praise to help change difficult behaviour and replace it with behaviour you want.
- Watch for times when your child behaves the way you want. When you see this or another behaviour you like, immediately get your child's attention. Then tell your child exactly what you liked.
- Start by praising every time you see the behaviour. When your child starts doing the behaviour more often, you can praise it less.
- If you're using praise to change behaviour, you can praise effort as well as achievement – for example, *'It's great how you used words to ask for that toy'*.
- Praising effort can encourage your child to try hard in the future – it's very motivating. But you can also use encouragement before and during an activity to help your child do the activity or behaviour. For example, *'Show me how well you can put your toys away'*
- Some children, especially those who are less confident, need more encouragement than others. When praise is encouraging and focused on effort, children are more likely to see trying hard as a good thing and are more likely to keep trying.

Remember

- See if you can give your child some words of encouragement every day. The small things you say can build up over time to have a big effect on your child.
- Try to praise more than you criticise, try to praise your child six times for every one time you say something negative.
- Rather than waiting until your child has done something perfectly to give a compliment, try to praise any effort or improvement.
- Surprise your child with a reward for good behaviour. For example, 'Thanks for picking up the toys – let's go to the park to celebrate'.
- Recognise and praise how hard your child is trying – for example, 'You worked really hard on that essay' or '*Thank you for remembering to hang your coat on the peg*'.
- Try to make your praise dependent on your child's behaviour, rather than your feelings. You might find that the more you look for good behaviour to praise, the more positive you'll feel (and the more good behaviour you'll see).