

Giving Praise & Positive Attention

What is it?

Praise* and **positive attention** encourage behaviors we want to see more of, including child communication.

Praise is making *specific positive comments* about a child's communication and behavior.

Positive attention is encouraging children in what they are doing by *paying attention to and being engaged* with them.

PC TALK Strategy Video
Praise & Positive Attention



<https://talk.ku.edu/tools/videos/>

Why is it important?

Positive comments, smiles, and nonverbal interactions, such as a pat on the back, let the child know they are doing something important.

When you use positive comments after children use vocalizations, words, and other methods of communication, a child is more likely to use them again in the future.

Positive attention for communication and other prosocial behaviors encourage children to practice and develop those skills.

Getting Started

*Today, we are going to talk about a strategy that encourages communication and increases the behaviors you want to see more of from a child. The strategy is Praise and Positive Attention. This specific type of praise works by letting children know exactly what they did that brought about the positive attention. We are also going to talk about why it is valuable to provide positive attention by **being present** for and **engaging** in activities with children.*

*We all have different thoughts about praise, influenced by our own childhood experiences and, as adults, our exposure to differing perspectives. If the caregiver you are working with has concerns, take time to learn those concerns and where they come from. Then, assure the caregiver the type of praise we are talking about today is very specific and will encourage child communication and positive behaviors.

Ways to Give Praise & Positive Attention



Watch for opportunities to use positive attention and praise throughout the day

This includes play, meals, transitions, and routine care such as changing diapers, putting on coats, and washing hands.



Ask questions to create opportunities for a child to receive positive attention

At dinner, model table manners and provide an opportunity for praise by saying, "Would you please pass me the bread? Thank you for passing me the bread! You're such a good helper."



Talk about the specific behavior the child engaged in that you want to see more of

Positive attention can be given for specific behaviors, such as trying new things, playing nicely with other children, communicating with sounds or gestures, and helping.



Notice when a child is using communication, then give attention and respond

When a child points to a favorite doll, label the doll and offer it to the child.



Learn what types of positive attention the child prefers

Use the child's personal preferences to encourage them. A child might prefer a smile, hug, pat on the back, or high five. Sometimes, playing with the child is most valuable.

Positive Attention

Pay attention, respond, and make positive comments to children when they use vocalizations, words, and gestures.



When you notice and talk about positive behaviors, that child and other children in the room have the chance to learn what is expected of them. It is especially important for children who often need to be redirected to hear when they are doing something positive, like listening, sharing, or helping.



Giving Positive Attention to Children Who Use Gestures & Sounds

Ideas for Giving Praise & Positive Attention During Activities



Play

- Tell a child how nicely they are playing. *"Wow, look at how nice you are playing with that puzzle."* Then, sit down and play together.
- Be specific with positive attention when a child gives another child a hug or a soft touch. *"You gave Kyle such a nice hug!"*
- Playing with a child gives positive attention and encourages communication. They can receive this positive attention best when you are at eye level and engaged with them.



Daily Routines

- Give a child attention for holding their bottle or cup by themselves by saying, *"You know just how to use that cup!"*
- Talk about how nicely the child is lying while you are changing their diaper. *"You are waiting so nicely for me to finish with your diaper."*
- Give positive attention as children are learning new skills, such as crawling, walking, or feeding themselves. *"Wow, look at you walking all by yourself!"*



Books

- Notice when a child is interested in a book, and give them positive attention by sitting with the child and looking at it together.
- When a child is looking at a book with you and points to or tries to label pictures, name things with them. *"You pointed to the tree! That's a big tree with green leaves."*
- Ask the child to help you turn the pages or hold the book to increase opportunities to give positive attention for helping.

When giving positive attention to children who are sensitive to touch, you can watch carefully to figure out what kind of positive attention they prefer. If they stiffen or pull away when you hug them, try a high five or pat on the back instead. If that is too much, smile at their eye level and clap quietly.

Positive Attention

Pay attention, respond, and make positive comments to children when they use vocalizations, words and gestures.



Giving Positive Attention to Children Who Use Words

Ideas for Giving Praise and Positive Attention During Activities



Play

- Provide multiples of toys so children can share more easily, creating opportunities to give positive attention for sharing. *"You are sharing your toys so nicely with your friends."*
- Model asking for toys using *"please"* and *"thank you,"* so children are more likely to use those words. This can create more opportunities to give positive attention for good manners. *"Thank you for saying 'please' when you asked for that toy."*
- A puzzle can provide many opportunities to give positive attention, both to celebrate successes and encourage asking for help. *"You got the piece in!" "You used your words to ask for help!"*



Daily Routines

- Give positive attention to children for doing things on their own, such as putting their coat on by themselves. *"You put on your coat all by yourself, great job!"*
- Respond with positive attention when children are eating nicely during mealtimes. *"You are using your spoon so nicely to eat your corn."*
- During transitions between activities, such as getting ready to go outside, give positive attention to children who are waiting patiently. *"Thank you for standing so nicely with your hands to yourself."*



Books

- Notice when a child is interested in a book, and respond with positive attention by sitting with the child and reading it together.
- When a child is sitting and reading a book nicely, let them know that you notice. *"You are sitting so nicely with your book; it looks like you really like it."*
- Give positive attention to children when they are sharing their book with a friend. *"Thanks for sharing your book with your friend. That was really nice of you."*

Children who are adjusting to a new place or who have experienced trauma might have a hard time sharing what type of positive attention they prefer.

You can offer a **choice** while showing options.

"Do you want a high five or a fist bump?"

Positive Attention

Pay attention, respond, and make positive comments to children when they use vocalizations, words, and gestures.

