



Help Your Child Learn to Make Choices

Do you ever wonder why your child says “no” so often? Saying no is how your child first learns to make choices. Like adults, children like to feel in control of what they do. When children make their own choices, they learn about themselves, how to make good decisions, and lets them know that you trust them. And, being able to make choices helps children avoid peer pressure when they are older. Allowing children to make choices does not mean that they are allowed to do whatever they want. Below are tips on ways to help your child make choices that work for him/her and for you.

INFANT:

- Give your child a toy that makes different sounds and has different features. Let her see what happens when she pushes the buttons and pulls the levers.
- Put three toys within reach of your child. Let him choose the toy(s) to play with. Your child may pick up the toys, look at, and play with them one or all of them.

TODDLER:

- When helping your toddler gets dressed in the morning, give her choices. At first, give clear choices. For example:
 - Show two shirts and say, “You can wear the blue shirt or the red shirt today. Which one do you want to wear?”
 - Show two pairs of shoes and say, “Do you want to wear sneakers or sandals?” Then, ask, “Which shoe do you want to put on first - the right one or the left one?”
- Ask your toddler to pick out two bedtime stories to read together.

PRESCHOOLERS:

- Let your child help you make lunch. Give her several choices: “Do you want a banana or an apple?” or “Do you want a cheese & crackers or a cheese sandwich?”
- When playing with your child, let her choose the games or toys to play with. She will love the chance to play her favorite game with you.
- Let your child decide in which order he will accomplish tasks. For example, at bedtime, say: “It’s time to get ready for bed. Do you want to brush your teeth or wash your face first?”

Book Suggestion

Mouse Was Mad. Linda Urban. Harcourt Children’s Books, 2009.