

5 WORDS TO AVOID IF YOU WANT YOUR KIDS TO CO-OPERATE

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I've noticed that there are five very common words that invite resistance rather than co-operation, from children who are termed (whether rightly or wrongly) 'strong-willed', 'stubborn' or 'know their mind'.

These 5 words to avoid are:

- **Must:** "You *must* be on time!"
- **Never:** "You should *never* be rude to your teacher."
- **Always:** "You should *always* clean your teeth before bed."
- **You:** "*You* need to go to bed now!"
- **Don't:** "*Don't* yell at your brother."

Here's an explanation and some alternatives as well:

'**Must**', '**Never**' and '**Always**' are absolute terms which invite resistance from those children and young people who do not like to be told what to do. *If you have more than one child there is a good chance you have one of these children.*

Replace absolute language with **moderate alternatives** that don't back kids into a corner.

"*Please be on time*" rather than "You must be on time."

"*It's best to be polite to your teacher*" rather than "You should never be rude to your teacher."

"*Clean your teeth before bed*" rather than "You should always clean your teeth before bed."

'**You**': Instead of telling your child what to do, let your child know what you will do. It's a subtle but powerful shift. For example:

"*I'm saying good night now*" rather than "Go to bed now."

"*I'll put the meal on the table when it's set*" rather than "Set the table!"

"*I'm driving you to school at 8.30*" rather than "Get ready by 8.30."

NB: You need to follow through if this is to be an effective use of language.

'**Don't**': Avoid ending an instruction on a negative as it only drives the negative behaviour deeper into the sub-conscious mind of your child. Saying "Don't yell at your brother" will ensure that your child will keep yelling again and again. Instead say the behaviour you'd like in positive terms. For example:

"Speak quietly to your brother" rather than "Don't yell at your brother."

If you can't eradicate "Don't" then develop the habit of ending on a positive. For example:

"Don't yell at your brother. Speak quietly."

Your choice of words makes a huge difference in terms of getting co-operation from more challenging kids.

Of course, some parents believe that their kids should always do as they say so their language is peppered with absolutes and negatives, which invites resistance from some kids. Family-life continues to be a battle between these parents and their children.

If this is the case for you then maybe your attitude as well as your language needs a little tweak and review.