

11 Ways to Praise Purposefully

1. Notice & Describe

Instead of “what a beautiful colouring! Well done!” say, “You are colouring with lots of colour”. Instead of “Good girl!” while your daughter is playing quietly with her tea set, say “I can see that you have made tea for you and your dolly”.

2. Ask Questions

If your child expects a praise, ask questions such as “I see that you did a colouring, tell me more about it? What did you draw? And what is it there in green?”

3. Smile Genuinely

If you feel the need to say “good boy, well done, you can offer a genuine smile instead. Children under the age of 6 are so much in a sensitive period for language that, if you talk, they will focus on what you say and not what you show them. When they practice the activity, smile at them. It is enough of an approval.

4. Ask About Their Feelings

If your child has completed a task, or comes back from nursery with a sticker and let you know what he did, ask him “how did it feel when you were first in the race?” “how does it make you feel to have built a gigantic tower?”.

5. Thank your Child

Let him know of the effects of his “generous or good” behaviour. “Thank you for choosing a quiet activity while I was feeding your sister. Now she is asleep, we have time to play together”.

6. Model Self-Praise

Say to yourself out loud when you are proud of yourself! “wow, I made a big effort today and I cooked a yummy dinner!”. “I have finished this work on time, I was super organized today”. “I feel good today as I ticked most of the things of my to do list”.



7. Never Mix Praise or Compare

Never mix praise with a put down and don't use praise to compare siblings. I'm proud of you dressing up by yourself “for once”. “You have tidied up your bedroom, and not like your brother who is so messy!”

8. Self-Correcting Activities

Provide activities that are self-correcting and encourage your child to check his work. If the material is self-correcting, the child will not need your approval. If your child is not sure he has done well, for example with his homework, encourage him to double check his answers, to use a dictionary to verify his spelling and so on.

9. You Did It Instead of Good Job

When you are used to say “good job”, transition to “You did it” when your child is seeking for your approval for doing something. The emphasis is on the action, there is no judgement

10. Praise the Effort

Praise the effort and not the outcome. Say “I see that you work very hard to clean the window” instead of “Thanks for cleaning the window.”

11. Join in Your Child's Joy

You can be proud of your child's achievement so share the joy with your child. “I am so happy for you” “Let's celebrate!”