PCIT-Toddlers 8 Rules of Effective Commands* (PDI-T phase)

Adapted from Eyberg and Funderburk (2011), Eight Rules of Effective Commands, pgs 72-73

*Over-riding rule that commands are used sparingly and only when the child is emotionally able to practice listening with a maximum of three commands practiced during session and during PDI-T Home Therapy Practice.

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<th>RULE</th>
<th>REASON</th>
<th>EXAMPLES</th>
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| 1. Commands should be DIRECTLY, rather than indirectly stated. | • Direct commands are provided in the form of a statement, rather than a question to clearly communicate that the child is independently expected to complete the task. | • Please hand me the block.  
• Put the train in the box please.  
• Sit by Mommy.  
  Instead of:  
  Will you hand me the block?  
  Let’s put the train in the box.  
  Come sit by me, ok. |
| 2. Commands should be given ONE AT A TIME. | • Increases the chances that the child can process and execute the provided task, particularly given toddler’s developmental level.  
• Improves the parent’s ability to determine if compliance has occurred. | • Please put the doll in the basket.  
  Instead of:  
  Put the doll, play clothes and wipes up on the counter.  
• Hold my hand.  
  Instead of:  
  Let’s go home. (gathering items & holding hands) |
| 3. Commands should be limited to SIMPLE CONCEPTS & PHRASES appropriate to toddler’s developmental level. | • Increases the child’s ability to understand the provided task.  
• Only the commands listed on your handout will be provided and practiced as they represent the limited, toddler-directed commands that should be provided to and expected from this age group. | • Sit by Daddy.  
  Instead of:  
  Stop running and calm down. |
| 4. Commands should always be SPECIFIC, rather than stated in general terms. | • Improves children’s understanding of what is expected.  
• Improves congruence between parent’s and children’s expectation for what is to be completed. | • Sit by Mommy.  
  Instead of:  
  Behave!  
• Hold my hand.  
  Instead of:  
  Stop touching everything! |

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<table>
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<th>Rule</th>
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<td><strong>5.</strong> A <strong>POSTIVE TOUCH</strong> (touching the child’s back) &amp; <strong>CLEAR PHYSICAL GESTURES</strong> (e.g., pointing to objects) must accompany an effective command.</td>
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- Increase toddlers’ chance of compliance by gaining their attention and allowing them to use their visual skills to orient toward the desired task.  
- Parent: (place hand softly on child’s back and holds out opposite hand)  
  Please hold Daddy’s hand.  
  *Instead of:*  
  Parent: (from across the room)  
  Come hold my hand! |
| **6.** Commands should be provided in a **TYPICAL, SPEAKING TONE OF VOICE**. | 
- Limits the intensity of the emotional feedback the child receives prior to compliance.  
- Improves parent’s ability to remain calm throughout the compliance sequence.  
- Parent: (at eye level of child and with typical tone of voice)  
  Please give Mommy the train.  
  *Instead of:*  
  Parent: (from across the room)  
  Give me the train! |
| **7.** **EXPLANATIONS** should remain **BRIEF** and **PROVIDED PRIOR** to the command **OR FOLLOWING** toddler **COMPLIANCE**. | 
- Decreases the chances that the child will become distracted by an explanation provided in between the command and child compliance.  
- Increases the likelihood of compliance by providing context to demands.  
- Method for teaching rationale and sequencing.  
- Parent: Uh-oh, time to go home. Hold Daddy’s hand please.  
  Child: (complies)  
  Parent: Good listening!  
  (while providing facial expressions and enthusiastic tone of voice).  
  *Instead of:*  
  Parent: Hold my hand. - Child: Why?  
  Parent: Clean up. – Child: Me play. |
| **8.** Parent must be in **CLOSE PROXIMITY** to the child **PRIOR TO** issuing a **COMMAND**. | 
- When possible, parent should physically position themselves on the child’s level (e.g., crouch down on the floor next to the child).  
- Increases likelihood child will comprehend and independently complete the task.  
- Increases the likelihood of child compliance by assisting in orienting the child’s attention toward the task.  
- Child: (running around room)  
  Parent: (gets near child closing off their running path and down to eye level)  
  Wow, story time! (holding out book)  
  Please sit with Mommy.  
  *Instead of:*  
  Parent: (chasing child around room) Sit down with me so we can read a story.|