

Parent Language –

Polite Language vs Direct Language

What is polite language?

Compared with other languages, English is considered a very 'polite' language. What this means is that when speaking with each other, English speakers often choose words that make them sound as polite as possible, for example "if you would like to take a seat" might mean "sit down" and "would you mind passing the salt" means "give me the salt".

The downside of this is that when it comes to talking we don't always say what we mean, and we don't always mean what we say!

Why is reducing polite language a good strategy?

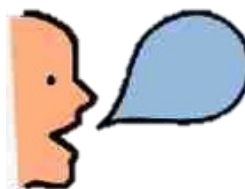
For children with language learning difficulties, this can be very tricky to tell the difference between what people say and what they mean. By being more direct with what we say, we can actually make it a lot easier for some children to understand what we mean.

How do I reduce overuse of polite language?

Have a think about the words you use when you talk and the message you are trying to convey with those words. Are you being clear with your words or is there room for misinterpretation / misunderstanding? Have a think about how you could choose different words to be clearer with what you mean.

Activities to try at home:

- ☐ 1. Do you want... / Would you like...
- ☐ 2. Shall we... / Should we... / Can you...
- ☐ 3. Turn from polite language into direct language



Do you want... / Would you like...

- Make sure to only ask this question if you genuinely want to know if a child wants something
- Don't ask this question if it is something you were planning to happen anyway
- E.g. Don't ask "do you want to go to the park" when you have decided that is what is happening. What happens if your child says "no"?
- Instead use "let's go to the park" or "come on, we're going to go to the park"
- E.g. Don't ask "would you like your dinner" when you have decided that it is dinner time. What happens if your child says "no"?
- Instead use "let's eat dinner" or "we're going to eat dinner" or "it's time for dinner"

Shall we... / Should we... / Can you...

- Make sure to only ask this question if you are generally asking a child's opinion
- Don't ask this question if it is something you were planning to happen today
- Don't ask e.g. "shall we do some tidying up?" when you have decided that is what is happening. What if your child says "no"?
- Instead use "let's do some tidying" or "we're going to do some tidying"
- Don't ask e.g. "should we brush our teeth?" when you have decided that it's time to brush teeth
- Instead use "let's brush our teeth" or "it's time to brush our teeth"

Turn from polite language into direct language

- Turn "do you want to get changed for P.E.?" into "it's time to get changed" or "get changed"
- Turn "do you want to clean your room?" into "let's clean your room" or "clean your room"
- Turn "would you like to give the books out?" into "give the books out"
- Turn "shall we go shopping?" into "it's time to go shopping" or "we're going shopping"

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