

25 POSITIVE VERBAL RESPONSES TO MINIMIZE NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDITION

POSITIVE TEACHER RESPONSES	EXAMPLE (AGES 4-7)
1. Prompting <i>Use the child's name to preview what comes next, reducing anxiety and building readiness</i>	• "Amara, in a little while it will be your turn to share your drawing." • "Jaylen, when we get to the rug, I'm going to ask you to read our agenda." • "Sofia, I'll be calling on you to share your favorite part of the story."
2. Enforceable Statements <i>Only say what you can actually follow through on, young children need predictability</i>	• "When everyone is sitting criss-cross, we will start our story." • "I read books to children who are using quiet bodies." • "When the blocks are put away, we can go outside."
3. The Language of Choice <i>Offer two simple, acceptable options to give children a sense of control</i>	• "Would you like to sit in the beanbag chair or on the floor pillow? You pick." • "You can use crayons or markers for your picture. Which do you choose?" • "Do you want to clean up the blocks first or the puzzles first?"
4. Name Dropping <i>Embed the child's name in the middle of a positive or instructional sentence to recapture attention</i>	• "The caterpillar, Marcus, will become a beautiful butterfly." • "Good readers, like Zoe, look at the pictures for clues." • "Scientists, Eli, ask questions just like you did."



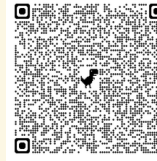
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5. <u>Warm Greetings & Positive Interactions</u> <i>Greet each child by name every day, aim for a 5:1 ratio of positive to corrective comments</i>	• "Good morning, Destiny! I am so glad you're here today." • "Isaiah, I've been thinking about you. I saved you a special spot." • "Nadia, your smile makes this classroom brighter."
6. <u>Whole-Group Narration</u> <i>Redirect the group by narrating what the majority of children are doing correctly</i>	• "I see most of my friends sitting quietly on the rug. That makes me so proud." • "Look at how Keion and Priya are walking with their hands to themselves." • "Table 2 is already working. Let's see the rest of our friends get started."
7. <u>Simple Rule Reminders</u> ('But Why?') <i>Explain the reason behind a rule in child-friendly language, young children respond better when they understand the 'why'</i>	• "We use walking feet inside because running can make someone fall and get hurt." • "We use quiet voices at centers so everyone's brain can focus." • "We take turns because everyone deserves a chance to share."
8. <u>Whole-Group Self-Check</u> <i>Invite the whole class to assess their own behavior using simple visuals or body signals</i>	• "Thumbs up if you were a good listener during story time. Thumbs sideways if you're still working on it." • "Show me on your fingers: 1 means 'I need help,' 5 means 'I've got it!'" • "Let's look at our class rules together. Which one did we do great today?"
9. <u>Gentle Redirect</u> <i>Refocus a child on the task without drawing attention to the off-task behavior</i>	• "Your job right now is to finish coloring the sun." • "Eyes on your paper, friend. You're almost done!" • "Lila, remember, we're drawing our feelings, not talking yet."



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10. <u>Strategic Seating</u> <i>Offer a seating change as a supportive tool, not a punishment</i>	• "DeShawn, let's find a spot where your brain can focus better. Come sit by me." • "How about you try the wiggle cushion today? It might help your body feel ready." • "Camille, would the floor spot near the window help you focus today?"
11. <u>Offer Assistance</u> <i>Check in with a child who seems stuck or dysregulated before escalating</i>	• "Theo, what do you need to feel ready right now?" • "Rosa, I'm right here. Let me help you figure this out." • "Can I sit with you for a minute and see what's hard?"
12. <u>Specific Verbal Praise</u> <i>Name exactly what the child did well, vague praise is less effective with young learners</i>	• "Jasmine, I noticed you put the book back in the right bin. That is being responsible!" • "Marcus, you used your words to tell him how you felt. That took courage." • "I love how Ava waited patiently for her turn without being asked."
13. <u>Catch Them Being Good</u> <i>Proactively notice and name positive behavior before problems start</i>	• "Mia, I see you sitting so nicely. Thank you for being ready." • "Carlos remembered to raise his hand all by himself. Did everyone see that?" • "Look at how Zara is cleaning up without anyone asking. That's a leader!"
14. <u>Pre-Corrects</u> <i>Set behavioral expectations before a transition or activity begins</i>	• "Before we go to the bathroom, let's remember: quiet voices and walking feet in the hallway." • "When I say go, you'll walk to your table, sit down, and wait for your paper." • "During partner share, look at your friend's eyes and use your 6-inch voice."



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15. <u>State the Expectation Positively</u> <i>Tell children what TO do instead of what NOT to do</i>	• "Feet on the floor, please." • "Hands are for helping and creating, keep them to yourself." • "Our voices are off during quiet reading. Show me a silent smile."
16. <u>Target / Stop / Do</u> <i>Use the child's name, make one clear request, and end with 'thank you', this closes the loop</i>	• "Jordan, please stop touching Mia's paper. Eyes on your own work. Thank you." • "Leo, please stop calling out. Raise your hand if you have something to share. Thank you." • "Chloe, please step back from the shelf. Take a breath and try again slowly. Thank you."
17. <u>Acknowledge & Redirect</u> <i>Validate the child's feeling or intention while redirecting the behavior</i>	• "I can see you're excited! Let's save that energy for the playground." • "Thank you for wanting to share, please raise your hand next time." • "I know it's hard to wait. You are doing a great job."
18. <u>Ask for an Alternative Response</u> <i>Guide the child to problem-solve a better way forward</i>	• "Grabbing isn't the way to ask. Can you show me how to ask with your words?" • "Yelling doesn't help me understand. Take a breath and try a quiet voice." • "What's another way you could let your friend know how you feel?"
19. <u>Closing Statement (Avoid Power Struggles)</u> <i>End a tense moment without escalating, young children need an exit ramp</i>	• "We can talk more about this after center time." • "I hear you. Right now our job is to finish our work. Let's reset." • "I'm not going to argue. Take a minute, and we'll try again."



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20. <u>Allow Cool-Down Time</u> <i>Give the child space and time to self-regulate before re-engaging</i>	• "You don't have to talk right now. Your only job is to calm your body." • "Go to the calm-down corner. When you're ready, come back and we'll try again." • "Take 5 big breaths. I'll check on you in a minute."
21. <u>Grandma's Law (First/Then)</u> <i>Frame the required task as the path to the desired one, young children respond well to 'first/then' language</i>	• "First we finish our snack, then we go outside." • "When your cubby is clean, you may pick a book from the reading basket." • "First, put on your shoes, then we can play with the sensory table."
22. <u>Take a Break / Cool-Down Spot</u> <i>Offer a designated calm space, frame it as support, never shame</i>	• "It looks like your body needs a break. Visit the peace corner and I'll come check on you." • "Let's go take a walk to the water fountain together." • "The calm-down kit is in the blue bin. Go pick something that helps your body feel better."
23. <u>Hurdle Help</u> <i>Sit beside a stuck or struggling child and help them take the very next small step</i>	• "Nia, you seem stuck. Let me help you get started, what's the very first thing you need to do?" • "Let's do the first one together, then you can do the next one all by yourself." • "I'll sit right here while you try. I'm not going anywhere."
24. <u>Natural & Logical Consequences</u> <i>Connect the consequence clearly and calmly to the child's choice, keep it simple and immediate</i>	• "If you throw the blocks, the blocks go away and we use something else." • "When we use kind words, our friends want to play with us." • "Only friends who are sitting safely can join us for snack."
25. <u>Direct Appeal to Connection</u> <i>Remind the child of your relationship and your belief in them, young children are motivated by belonging</i>	• "I care about you too much to let this keep happening. Let's figure this out together." • "You are an important part of our class family. How can we make this right?" • "I know this isn't the kind of friend you want to be. Tell me what happened."