

## WHEN AND HOW TO REDIRECT A CHILD

The goal is to address a child's specific behavior in a **quick, consistent interaction** that leads to reinforcing positive behaviors and extinguishing negative behaviors. The adult stays respectful, apprises the child of missing information, guides the child with an unemotional interaction and demonstration, and ends with an opportunity for the child to try the actions/words for one's self. These brief interactions are intended to be short, yet lead to long lasting results. Intentionally, interaction time should be in seconds, rather than minutes.

The following seven steps outline the approach:

1. **Stay observant:** Watch the children for any situation that needs adult intervention. Montessori was a patient observer and researcher of children while knowing that occasionally there was a need for a "clarion call." It is always easier to redirect children at the first indication of a problem.

**Key indicator: Is there clear danger for the child or others? Clear abuse of the environment? Does the child need information?**

2. **Be active:** Approach the child; be on the child's level; make eye contact.

**Key indicator: Adult should be able to use a quiet, calm voice. The adult actively stays emotionally calm and uses self-awareness.**

3. **Be objective:** Make sure that the child knows you are there because of what you have observed. Share the situation so you can solve it together. This is a respectful way to approach the child. Use statements like: "I see you rocking the shelf and that will hurt

someone (or yourself).” “Your friends are waiting to come down the slide,” addressed to the child blocking the bottom. “That stick has a sharp point on it.”

***Key indicator: short factual statement. The child is not “over-talked.”***

4. **Clearly, quickly state the common practice, rule, or human right to the child.** These are the collaborative practices, rules or rights that have been previously established at the school. “Everyone goes down the slide to stay safe.” “The class agreed that all pointed sticks are safest staying on the ground,” can be a reminder to an elementary child. “At school everyone has the right to work undisturbed.” “Walking down the stairs helps make sure that no one gets hurt.”

***Key indicator: statement is short; statement is not framed as a question; statement does not lead into an adult/child discussion***

5. **State the specific appropriate action that the child should do, and offer to the child the opportunity to do that action.** “Please put the sharp stick on the ground or in the trash bin.” “This is the shelf where we put cups and glasses.” “Please simply ask her for a turn with the jump rope when she is done.”

***Key indicator is the same as in step four***

6. **Observe the child doing the appropriate action.** This opportunity for correct practice is extremely important. This is a non-verbal stage of addressing the situation. The adult must be focused exclusively on the action and be totally present with a warm presence for the child. Stay with the child all the way to completion of the action.

***Key indicator: Adult can confirm that child has followed direction to completion. The adult is self-aware of being present with the child.***

7. **Acknowledge that the child has completed the appropriate action or behavior, smile, and turn your attention to other matters!** Psychologically, this may be the most important for maintaining a positive relationship and fostering the child's independence. Acknowledgment is known to be a powerful behavior shaping practice. This is distinct from simple praise which can lead to dependency and derails self-motivation in children. Reinforce the appropriate action or behavior with a smile or nod or appropriate short statement: "Now that sharp stick on the playground is out of the way. No one will get hurt!" "Now everyone is free to come down the slide, that's safe!" "Taking turns is fair for everyone!"

***Key indicator: Statements acknowledge effort, call attention to detail, direct attention back to the appropriate action, show a modest and sincere positive emotion... smile!***

Note: Detrimental praise has not been used; that is, undeserving or inflating, creating dependence on the adult, focusing on the person and not the action, e.g., "That's a good boy!" or shows exaggerated emotion: syrupy sweet, "I love you for doing that."

**Acknowledge and move on. It's over.**