

# LADC Behavior Handout



## Labeled Praises and How they Shape Behavior

Discovery ways to shape your child's behavior through positive attention!

Where Attention Goes, Behavior Grows.

## Providing Effective Labeled Praise Statements

So often parents think that providing praise to children will take away their internal motivation; however, they then give ample amounts of negative attention towards inappropriate behavior. So maybe what is helpful is to redefine what praise is. Praise is providing positive attention towards a behavior. Praise is noticing behaviors we want to see more of. Praise and positive attention are needed when teaching new behaviors in a child or strengthening the presence of infrequent behaviors. Remember the saying, *Where Attention Goes, Behavior Grows*.

Don't you want to see your child develop and demonstrate kind, appropriate behavior with others? Do you want to make sure your child can wait patiently, demonstrate friendship skills, regulate their emotions and behavior, and listen and follow directions? If so, then keep reading as we will teach you how to provide positive attention in a way that will transform your child's behavior or even maintain the positive behaviors they already demonstrate.

## What are Labeled Praise Statements?

There are two types of praise statements. Unlabeled praise and Labeled praise. Unlabeled praise is something that encourages a child but does not tell a child exactly what it is that they are doing well. Examples of unlabeled praise statements are things like "good", "thank you", "great work", or "nice job".

Remember the saying, *Where Attention Goes, Behavior Grows*. If you want to see more of a specific positive behavior from your child, then you want to make sure you are giving positive attention to a specific behavior, so that your child knows exactly what it is that you like. Therefore, a labeled praise statement would be saying something like, "Thank you for cleaning up all those toys". In order for praise/positive attention to effectively shape your child's behavior, you need to use labeled praise statements.

## Why Do We Phrase Praise Statements in a Positive Way?

So often I hear parents or teachers saying things like “Thank you for not getting angry” or “Thank you for not running in the hallway”. These statements have hidden criticisms in them as the statement is drawing attention to inappropriate behavior. Again, going back to the saying *Where Attention Goes, Behavior Grows*, if we are giving attention to the inappropriate behavior that we don’t want by referring to it in our labeled praises, then a child will continue to do the behavior.

Instead, we want to provide attention for the positive opposite of those problem behaviors. Using the above examples, instead of saying “Thank you for not getting angry” you could say, “Thank you for staying calm”. Instead of saying “Thank you for not running in the hallway”, you could say, “Thank you for using your walking feet in the hallway”. You are providing attention to the positive opposite behavior. In other words, you are providing attention the behavior that you want to see more of!

## How Does One Know What Behaviors to Praise?

One great way to identify the behaviors to provide labeled praises for is to first identify the problem or difficult behaviors. Examples of problem behaviors could be not listening, pushing other children, making loud noises, taking toys from friends, etc. Once you have identified the problem behavior, you want to start thinking about the opposite of that problem behavior. What is a behavior that if the child was doing a certain behavior, they wouldn’t be able to also do the problem behavior? For example, what is a positive opposite behavior for pushing other children? You want to identify the behavior you want to see more of or identify a behavior that is incompatible with pushing other children.

Some examples of behaviors to provide labeled praise statements for include using gentle hands, keeping hands to himself, folding hands in lap, walking with hands in pockets, touching friends gentle, or playing calmly next to other children. These are just some examples. The example of *walking with hands in pockets* is an example of providing a labeled praise statement for an incompatible behavior. If a child is walking with their hands in their pocket, then they aren’t able to push with those hands as well. Below is a table of ideas with the problem behaviors listed in the left column and the positive opposite behaviors to notice and praise in the right column. Remember, if you want to change a child’s behavior, you need to provide positive attention for the behavior you want to see more of.

Read on to the next page to learn about positive opposite praise statements for the most common problem behaviors!

# Praising the Positive Opposite to Decrease Problem Behaviors

Problem Behaviors	Positive Opposite Behaviors to Notice and Praise
Dawdling/Not Listening	Thank you for doing it right away.
	Great job doing it the first time I asked.
	I love how you put the toys away so quickly.
	Great job paying attention to what I asked.
	I like how you were able to make a quick decision!
	Thank you for answering my question right away!
	You did a terrific job finishing that task quickly.
Noncompliance/Not Following Directions	Great work following directions!
	Thank you for listening right away!
	Terrific job cleaning up without me even asking!
	I love how you did that right away!
	Thanks for doing that with a positive attitude.
	Thanks for staying calm when I asked you to clean up to leave.
	I love how you did what I asked even though you didn't want to stop playing.
Difficulties Communicating/ Expressing Oneself	Thank you for using your words to tell me what made you upset!
	I love how you shared your ideas with me.
	Thank you for using your indoor voice to talk with me.
	Excellent work using your big girl/boy voice to tell me what made you sad.
	That made me so happy to see you ask a friend to share with you.
	Thank you for using your kind words to tell me what you were needing.
	Awesome job using your manners to ask for help!
Destructive/Careless	I like how you are playing with the toys so gently.
	Thanks for coming up with another idea on how to play with the toys in a safe way.
	Thanks for playing so calmly with your friends.
	I like how nicely you are carrying that to me.

# Praising the Positive Opposite Behaviors Continued

Anger Outbursts	I love how you calmed yourself down when you were upset!
	Great job identifying with words how that made you feel.
	Thank you for telling me calmly what you were needing.
	That was so great how you problem solved the situation when you were frustrated.
	I really liked that you told me what happened with a soft voice.
	Great job staying calm when you had to wait to use that toy while someone else was using it!
Aggressive Behaviors Towards Others	Thank you for using gentle hands while play with your friends.
	I love how you have enough space between your body and your friend's body so that you can both play safely.
	I really liked how you were such a good friend to him by helping him.
	Great choice to keep your hands to yourself while walking.
	I love the way you used your words to ask your friend to share the toy.
	Great job making good decisions when playing with your friends.
Attention Problems/ Overactive	It makes me so happy to see you taking turns while playing.
	Great job completing the entire activity on your own.
	I love how much you are concentrating on what you are doing!
	Thank you for finishing cleaning up!
	You are doing such a terrific job focusing on that activity.
	I can see you are working so hard having quiet hands and feet today
	I am very proud of how still you are sitting while working on this
It made me so happy to see you think about that carefully before deciding what to do.	
Interrupts/ Attention Seeking	Thank you for waiting so patiently.
	I love how you are all taking turns while playing together.
	Great job raising your hand so that I knew you had something to say!
	I really liked that you tapped my arm, so I knew you were wanting to tell me something.
	It makes me so happy to hear you use your polite words.
	Terrific job letting others share their ideas too.