



Ask for It with Words

Turn an impulsive demand into a calmer request.

Helps Your Child Grow



Emotional & Behavioral Self-Regulation

Revisiting a request for a cookie helps your child shift from an urgent action or demand toward a more appropriate way to ask.



Attending and Understanding

Responding to the need first, then modeling a polite request, helps your child understand the words and gradually use language instead of acting on the impulse.

Steps

- A three-and-a-half-year-old may know polite phrases but forget them when excited - for example, reaching straight for a cookie.
- Acknowledge the need first, then guide the wording: "You want a cookie. Taking it from my hand doesn't feel good. You can ask me with words."
- If your child needs a model, say, "You can ask, 'Mom, may I have a cookie?'"
- When they repeat or create a polite request, respond warmly: "Thank you for asking. Here you go."
- Your everyday models and reminders give your child repeated practice expressing needs respectfully.

Tips

- Avoid labels and commands such as "You're so rude" or "No grabbing." They tell your child they are being scolded without showing what to do instead. Model the words they can use.
- Let your child hear family members say "please," "thank you," and "may I?" in everyday life. Polite language grows through imitation.

Observations

- ☐ Changes an impolite phrase to a polite one after your prompt
- ☐ Responds appropriately to your suggestion