

Appendix 3

The Language of Choice – 3 Steps to Success

Step 1 – Statement of reality (tell them what you see)

Ricky, you're climbing over the fence.

Never ask a child **why** they are doing what they are doing.

It is confrontational and you don't actually need to know why they are doing it – they just need to **stop** it!

After hearing you use a statement of reality, many children will quickly do something to change the behaviour without having to move further down the script. Remember: you need to give them **take-up time** to do this rather than stand over them which again can be confrontational. Remember to praise them if they change their behaviour.

Should they not change their behaviour, the next part of your script is:

Step 2 – Describe the behaviour you want to see, ending the statement with a thank you

Ricky, you need to collect the ball by using the gate – thank you.

Rather than starting or ending your statement with **please**, use a **thank you** instead. A thank you carries more of an **expectation** that they will do as you have asked them to do.

Remember to use these scripts with a smile in your voice and on your face as you are more likely to get positive results.

Step 3 – Statement of choice (Real or consequence)

Real choices

Offering real choices means the child has a degree of control over how the necessary outcome is achieved. The teacher would be happy with either choice as both result in the same outcome. e.g. You can choose to leave the classroom and work with Mrs Benn or Mrs Hooper – who would you prefer to work with?

The choice of a consequence

The language of choices and consequences gives the child the responsibility for the consequences that you will carry out (and you **must** deliver consequences or the child will learn that you do not follow threats through).

Ricky, if you choose to continue to climb over the fence then you'll get a Step 2 for not following my instructions. It's your choice.

Although it's easier said than done, you should remain calm and assertive rather than aggressive when using these scripts. If you lose your cool, then the child will pick up on your tone and may well be aggressive back which will make the situation worse.

Most importantly, if after using the language of choice the child chooses to do the right thing, then you **must** praise them for making the right choice. This means that the child learns that it's good to do the right thing and that you are pleased that they have made a good choice. Every child loves to be praised on the inside, even though they might not show it on the outside.

Well done Ricky, you made the right choice.

Ignore them stomping around or grumbling as they do the right thing – the most important thing is that they have made the right choice!

Should the child choose not to do as you have asked, then it's absolutely simple: **you follow through with the consequences you stated.**

Don't cave in to their protests as you carry out the consequences – if you are consistent, the methods outlined will work. You could repeatedly say e.g. 'In our school, everyone has to follow adult instructions' which reminds them of the rule which never changes; this implies the system is there and is fair, rather than personal and 'against' them.