



Developmental Stages of Cooperation

The ability to cooperate, like other abilities, changes and grows with a child's developmental stage.

1. Be sure that what you demand is not beyond the child's ability.
2. Be sure that you have the child's attention before you speak.

18 months: The child of this age does not, as a rule, obey direct commands. In fact she is likely to do exactly the opposite of what you request.

2 ½ years: The child may obey some simple commands, but in general won't respond. Techniques and indirect approaches usually work better than direct commands.

3 years: At this age most children are much more responsive to directions. Many like to please and conform, within the limits of their abilities. They are attentive to spoken directions. They respond best to specific rather than general directions and are susceptible to both praise and blame.

4 years: Children are less anxious to please and conform. They like to do things their own way and enjoy defying adults. They are out of bounds and resistant in many ways. Children of this age are less sensitive to praise and blame.

5 years: Conforming five needs, invites and accepts supervision and direction. They ask for directions, and thrive on praise and conformity.

6 years: Six usually responds slowly or even negatively to commands, you can ignore her initial, "no, I won't" she may later carry out the request spontaneously, as though it were her own idea. If she says, "No," try, "See if you can do it before I count to ten," she needs a little time and leeway.

7 years: She may start to obey and then get into a detour along the way. Warning her in advance, reminding her when the time comes and checking to see that she does not get off track along the way will help her complete the task.

8 years: Eight usually delays somewhat in carrying out a request and may argue and find excuses, but she finally obeys with "If you insist."

9 years: Considerable improvement here. Many can now interrupt their own activity (so difficult at seven) in response to a request or demand from the adult. She may postpone, forget and need to be reminded.

10 years: The Ten year old is reasonably good about carrying out directions. Children of all ages need to be given choices: “would you like to brush your teeth now or in 10 minutes when the timer goes off?”