



## 10 Positive Reinforcement Do's and Don'ts (for Parents of Teens)

From *Taming Teen Behavior with Positive Reinforcement*  
By Russ Kinley

1. **Do:** I noticed how you handled that—nicely done.

*Why it works:* Teens crave autonomy and recognition.

**Don't:** Finally, you did something right.

2. **Do:** Thanks for following through. That helps all of us.

*Why it works:* Reinforces responsibility and impact.

**Don't:** It's about time.

3. **Do:** You made a good choice there. That shows maturity.

*Why it works:* Links behavior to identity.

**Don't:** Why can't you always act like this?

4. **Do:** I can see how hard you worked on that.

*Why it works:* Encourages effort over outcome.

**Don't:** That's easy—why did it take you so long?

5. **Do:** I trust you to handle this. Let me know if you need backup.

*Why it works:* Signals belief with a safety net.

**Don't:** Don't mess this up.

**6. Do:** You kept your cool. That's not easy—good job.

*Why it works:* Praises emotional self-regulation.

**Don't:** Well, that was a surprise.

**7. Do:** I appreciate your honesty—even when it's hard to hear.

*Why it works:* Builds trust and encourages openness.

**Don't:** You're grounded for telling me the truth.

**8. Do:** I saw you help your sister without being asked. That was kind.

*Why it works:* Reinforces prosocial behavior.

**Don't:** That's a first.

**9. Do:** You handled that differently than last time. That's growth.

*Why it works:* Highlights progress, not perfection.

**Don't:** At least you didn't totally screw it up.

**10. Do:** I'm proud of the way you handled that—even if it didn't go perfectly.

*Why it works:* Focuses on process, not outcome.

**Don't:** Well, you still could've done better.

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