

# Essential Eight Skills: Following directions related to health and safety

*Why is following directions related to health and safety important?*

Adults can often take it for granted that we understand why we do what we are told to keep ourselves safe. For children the connection between doing what you are told and safety is not completely clear to them.

It is important that we teach children the importance of following directions so that they keep safe, and will continue to apply such rules across many areas of their life.

*What does it look like in daily life?*

- Holding an adult's hand when crossing the road (we would always do this with a young child to ensure their safety)
- Not touching hot dishes on the dinner table
- Holding scissors safely
- Not climbing on the furniture
- Not running in the house



## Essential Eight Skills:

1. Making a request
2. Waiting
3. Accepting removals/transitions/sharing/turn taking
4. Completing tasks when requested
5. Accepting 'no'
6. Following directions related to health & safety
7. Completing daily living skills related to health & safety
8. Tolerating situations related to health & safety

Armstrong, H., Denne, L. D., & Bailey, T. (2021). The role of key skills as a risk marker for the development of challenging behaviour in children and young people who have an intellectual disability. *International Journal of Positive Behavioural Support*, 11(2), 3-14.

## How to learn and practise

- Decide what behaviours you are willing to accept in your home. Be consistent in how you manage this.
- Offer more appropriate opportunities for your child to run or climb, such as at the park or in a field.
- Use clear language and gestures to show your child what you mean. For example, stick your hand out every time you approach a road, take their hand gently and slowly and say 'hold hands' to tell, rather than ask them that this is what you need to do. Your child may need to see the gesture, hear the words and experience this behaviour many times before they spontaneously take your hand but continue to take their hand anyway for their safety.

## How to support learning

- Keep language simple
- Use key phrases highlighting what they are doing well
- Use lots of praise so they associate the skill with positivity, e.g. 'well done' or 'good listening'
- Gradually increase the difficulty of the tasks, e.g. start by teaching directions with minimal risk before building up to more risky situations in unfamiliar environments but only do this when ready and safe

Please visit our website for videos explaining in more detail how to practise these and other essential skills

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