

Sit! Stay! Speak! Creating Boundaries to Improve Behavior and Performance in Young Children

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1. Behavioral principles are true across all species: We do what we do because it is profitable to do so.
2. Improving communication does not necessarily improve behavior. There are brats that talk.
3. If the child can't sit for the lesson, sitting **IS** the lesson. Use escape resistant spaces.
4. Use visual targets to train behaviors in kids with behavior and language deficits. Add language later.
5. Start with low stakes activities, then generalize to high stakes activities. Make it easy!
6. Break tasks down into tiny increments and use multiple successive opportunities to practice.
7. Sequences that are forward chained can be prone to many errors "baked in." Sequences that are backward chained are often more successful...and require less prompting.
8. Practice and enforce universal incompatible behaviors: Come here. Stay there. Give me that.
9. Of all the people involved, the kid may not be the biggest impediment to progress. Your team will need support, education, reassurance, and most probably a reality check.
10. Use science, not wishful thinking!
11. Say "no." Mean it. Follow through. Inconsistent responses from your team will result in stabilizing undesirable behaviors.
12. Keep moving the goals forward. Celebrate even tiny advancements.
13. Persist. The secret ingredient to miracles is...sweat. Do not expect to address these issues without stumbling, pushback, and regression. Expect to address issues more than once. Changing behavior isn't like changing a lightbulb.

You can do this!

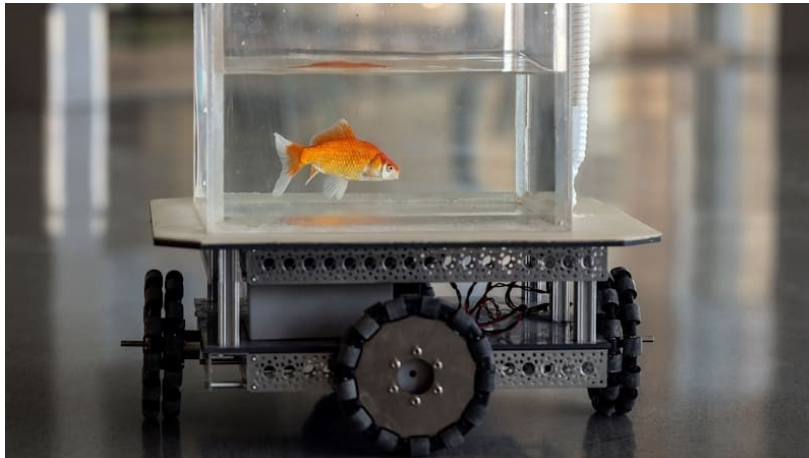
Resources

Glickman, E. R. (2016). *Your kid's a brat and it's all your fault: Nip the attitude in the bud—from toddler to tween*. Ashland, OR: Blackstone Audio.

Jones, F. H., Jones, P., & Talbott, J. J. L. (2013). *Tools for teaching: Discipline, instruction, Motivation*. BookBaby.

Pryor, K., & Pryor, K. (2018). *Don't shoot the dog!: the new art of teaching and training*. Dorking, Surrey: Ringpress Books Ltd.

Steffens, C., & Gorin, S. (2004). *Learning to play, playing to learn: games and activities to teach sharing, caring, and compromise*. Tucson, AZ: Creative Spirit.



For Perspective

Givon, S., Samina, M., Ben-Shahar, O., & Segev, R. (2022). From fish out of water to new insights on navigation mechanisms in animals. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 419, 113711. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbr.2021.113711>

It is impressive to watch a skilled dog compete in agility classes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W-ZrEBzrTTM>

But, I'm much more impressed by the trainers who had only 5 days to train chickens to go through similar challenges.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUahZswnbZE>

Is the kid that inspired you to come here today at least as smart as a chicken? goldfish? Hissing cockroach? Trainers succeeded in shaping these species to do complex sequences.

You can train a child to do complex things, too!