

Are You Serious About the Rules You Make?

I'm confused. Sometimes you tell me to do something but don't notice whether I do it or not. Other times you get real mad if I don't follow directions as soon as you give them. It seems like your rules depend on how busy you are or how you are feeling. I never really know if you mean what you say. Help me figure it out.

What I Want You to Know

I remember one time when I was playing outside and you told me to come in right away. I kept playing. It was an hour later before you realized I was still outside.

I remember another time when you told me to come in and I didn't do it.



A few minutes later, you were back outside dragging me in.

It's hard for me to tell whether you mean what you say or not.

Here's How You Can Help Me

I know that you are serious about the rules you make when I see you enforce them.

Now that doesn't mean you need to make a whole bunch of rules. You don't. But when you *make a rule that really matters*, make sure you stick to it. That's how I'll learn to respect you and the rules you make.

The way you enforce your rules makes a lot of difference. If you get mad at me and punish me, I learn to be resentful. If you *show me in a kind way* that you mean what you say, then I learn to take you seriously.

For example, if I'm playing when dinner is almost ready, you might warn me, "Ten minutes until dinner." Then, when it's time for dinner, you could tell me, "Time to come now."

But don't run off after telling me to come in for dinner. I probably will have a hard time setting aside my toys.

So give me a few seconds and then ask, "Are you having a hard time leaving your toys? Do you need my help?" If I don't come right away, you can take my hand and say, "It is so hard to quit playing! But it's time for dinner now."

This may sound like a lot of work. But when I learn that you really mean what you say, I will come when I'm called. When you show this firmness while being kind, I also learn to trust you and feel close to you. Even when I do something that upsets you, please don't spank or hit me.

Thank you for helping me grow up.

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating

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