

Giving Feedback – Praising the Process

When our children do well at something, we want to praise them, and of course we should praise them, but how we do this can make a big difference to how children perceive this.

Praising the process, rather than just the outcome or rather than praising your child directly, can have a more positive impact, and helps support a growth mindset.

Statements like “You’re a natural”, that focus on your child instead of the learning process may cause your child to internalise those labels and develop a fixed mindset towards their learning. This could cause them to believe that learning something new should come easily to them, so when this doesn't happen it's because they're not smart, or not 'a natural', and can make them avoid situations where they may be challenged or have to learn something new, for fear of looking bad.

It's also important to bear in mind what the starting point was for your child. If they found something easy and did well with little effort, the praise or feedback given should be different to that you would give if they felt challenged and put in lots of effort to succeed.

Explore the examples below to see how and when certain types of praise and feedback may be more helpful.

Situation	What praise you could give
Your child has done well after putting in lots of effort. They really challenged themselves and worked hard.	<p><i>“You really studied hard, and it paid off. I can see how much you’ve improved. Outlining the key points was a good strategy.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s great that you kept trying different ways of solving that maths problem until you got it.”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m very proud of you for not giving up. You must be really proud of yourself too!”</i></p>
Your child has tried really hard but hasn't done as well as they would have liked to, and they may have made some mistakes too.	<p><i>“Everyone learns differently. Let’s try to find a way that works for you.”</i></p> <p><i>“You’re not there <u>yet</u>, and that’s ok. Let’s look at what other strategies you could try that might help you.”</i></p> <p><i>“Making mistakes is part of learning. Mistakes show you what you need to work on going forward. They’re really helpful.”</i></p> <p><i>“Look at how much progress you’ve made on this. Do you remember how much more challenging this was (yesterday/last week/last year)?”</i></p>
Your child has done well quite easily and with little effort required.	<p>Avoid praising speed or perfection.</p> <p>You could say: <i>“You finished that assignment so quickly; it must’ve been too easy. Let’s try something more challenging that you can really learn from.”</i></p>