

# Say It with Scripts



TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SCRIPTS, CHECK OUT THE PIONEERING WORK OF THE KARYN PURVIS INSTITUTE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND TBRI ([HTTPS://CHILD.TCU.EDU](https://child.tcu.edu)).



# What is a script?



short phrases meant to direct our kids back to the behaviors we want to see; allows for behavioral redos



easily remembered by the parent and the child



Can Be used proactively and reactively

## WHY? WHY? WHY? WHY?

### WHY IS THIS HARDER FOR OUR KIDS?

Lack experience having good communication skills modeled for them—scripts can teach them!

Have underdeveloped parts of their brain due to neglect—scripts can help them better process & follow through with what you are asking of them!

Have language delays—scripts can help because they are short and easy to remember!

Are highly reactive, may be hypervigilant or stay in more regular states of flight, fight, or freeze—scripts help us use less words so we don't trigger our kids!

Some of our kids are really good at getting us into back & forth verbal arguments—logic doesn't work here, but scripts do!

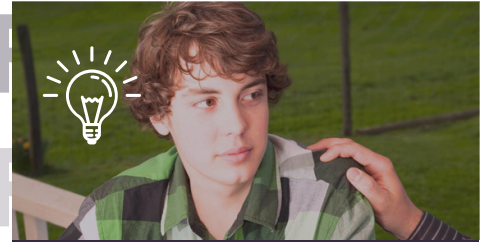
# PROACTIVE SCRIPTS



While playing with my toddler, I pat the stuffed animal he's playing with and say "Gentle and kind."



I play barbies with my 7 year old and we practice the daughter asking the mother for something respectfully and disrespectfully (because that is a lot more fun!) "Are you asking or telling?"



With my 14 year old, I go out and play catch with him and I bring up a pattern of disrespect I'm seeing and we talk out what he'll say and what I'll say to better communicate during those times. "Try that again with respect."

# REACTIVE SCRIPTS



My toddler throws his toy on the ground and I say, "Nope remember, gentle and kind. Try again" This initiates a redo. My toddler picks up the toy and puts it gently in the basket.



My 8 year old comes around the corner and demands I take her to the store to buy something. I turn to her and say, "Are you asking or telling?" This initiates a redo. She goes back around the corner, comes into the room, and says "Hey mom, I was wondering if we have time to run to the store today to buy something?"



My teen responds to my request that he take out the trash with an eye roll and words under his breath. I say, "Let's try that again." This initiates a redo. I ask him again to take out the trash and this time he says, "Okay."

# TIPS

## ● **MAKE THEM YOURS**

Personalize scripts for your family culture and language.

## ● **TEACH THROUGH PLAY**

We teach scripts proactively through play and conversations. For instance, play “right way, wrong way” role play for younger kids or engage in some kind of bonding activity with your teen as you talk out a pattern of behavior you are seeing and a better way you can communicate about it with one another.

## ● **DISPLAY THE SCRIPTS IN YOUR HOME**

When a new kid joins your family: consider having your scripts written out, placed around the home, make them the basis for the household rules, and go over them as a family. Refer back to them during teachable moments.

## ● **START SMALL**

It will take awhile to get used to using your new scripts. Consider making a short list to start, writing them down on note cards, and placing them somewhere you'll remember to see them regularly.

## ● **CHOOSE THE RIGHT TIME**

We don't use a new script for the first time or try to teach scripts during a meltdown or behavioral challenge. Your child isn't teachable in that moment, they won't understand what you're trying to get them to do, and the script won't work. Teach when you and your child are both regulated!

## ● **BEHAVIORAL REDOS**

Scripts lead to behavioral redo opportunities, which are really powerful, because they give the child a motor memory connection of the right way to do something.



# Example Scripts

**Reminder: Scripts are not meant to be punitive. You want to simply remind children of the right behaviors and lead them to do it.**

Scripts are meant to replace negative words we use when frustrated. They're meant to keep connection with our kids, so watch your tone and posture when using them. Make sure to be positive and encouraging when your kids do it right with verbal affirmations, high fives, etc. The goal is for your Kids to eventually stop themselves from doing the unwanted behaviors.

- **"Try that again with respect"**

When to use: Used when a disrespectful tone or word has been said by your child

*Other ways to say it: Hold up, try again*

- **"Use your words"**

When to use: Used when your child is whining, fussing, or having a minor meltdown instead of using words to explain what they need

Other ways to say it: "What do you need?" "Words please." "I need words."

- **"Who's the boss?"**

When to use: Used when your child is becoming bossy, sassy, or trying to control the situation

Other ways to say it: "Adults are in charge." "Check in." "Check with me."

- **"Gentle and kind"**

When to use: Used when your child has become more physically aggressive than necessary

Other ways to say it: "No hurts." "Be cool."

- **"Focus and complete your task"**

When to use: Used if you have a child who struggles with sustaining their attention on something or frequently wander off task

- **"With permission and supervision"**

When to use: Used to give children boundaries on what they can't do independently

Other ways to say it: "Ask permission." "Check with me."

- **"Are you asking or telling?"**

When to use: Used when your child has demanded something from you instead of asking respectfully

Other ways to say it: "Is that a question?"

- **"Let's work it out"**

When to use: Used when your child is struggling with a transition or direction you have given them and they are showing you behaviors instead of asking for something with words

Other ways to say it: "Work it out." "Make me a deal."



# Benefits of Using Scripts

- **Reduces frustration and keeps us from escalating conflict—by yelling, nagging, or threatening**
- Helps us remember what to say, gives us a quick easy phrase to pull out of our parenting toolbox
- **Replaces negative words we use when frustrated**
- Exposes our own personal challenges: having the last word, winning the argument, being right, etc. When we understand ourselves a bit better, we can be better caregivers
- **Keeps us connected to our kids—because it's more of a partnership response and less punitive**
- Helps us maintain our authority—because we aren't sharing it with them through the back and forth exchanges that so many of our kids can trap us in



To create a new family culture, you need a new language.

"The Connected Parent" book



# For More Information



Helpful Link: [Free printable posters](#)



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Further Reading:  
[The Connected Child: chapter 5](#)  
[The Connected Parent: chapter 3](#)





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