

The When-Then approach – (also called Grandma's Rule)

The benefits to this approach are threefold. **First**, your request is very specific, and thus can be understood by your child. **Second**, you are acknowledging your child's wants and needs at the same time that you are stating you wants and needs. **Third**, you are approaching the issue in a way that invites your child to cooperate. Here's how it works:

You may _____ after you _____.

You may play outside after you do the dishes.

You may watch a movie after you do your homework.

We will read a story after you put your pajamas on.

As soon as you scoop the cat litter you can play your new computer game.

An added benefit to using Grandma's Rule is that it eliminates the need to use "fighting words."

Fighting words are those that start a battle even before the rest of the sentence is heard — words such as, You can't, Don't, No, and Stop!

Notice how the choice of words affects the feeling conveyed by these requests:

-You can't go outside until you finish your homework.

Yes, you can go outside just as soon as you finish your homework.

-Don't eat that cookie until after your dinner.

Yes, you can have a cookie right after dinner.

-No, you can't go to Jimmy's house.

You can go to Jimmy's house on Saturday, after soccer practice.

As you can see, Grandma's rule allows you to use positive communication while being very specific about what you want. And the best thing is—it works!

In my grandma's day, it was understood that children had certain responsibilities as members of the family. They "earned" their privileges by fulfilling their responsibilities first. The idea behind this rule is that you acknowledge something the child would like to do as the second step in a process. You define the first step as a chore, action or activity that must be done before the privilege is granted.

Excerpted with permission by Elizabeth Pantley from Kid Cooperation (New Harbinger, 1996).