

One of our goals as parents is to give our kids messages they understand. Remember, descriptions of behavior should be specific and concrete—something that you can see, hear, or measure.

Examples:

1. When my kids come home from school, they put their books away and ask if there is anything that needs to be done to help around the house.
2. When I tell my daughter that her jeans are too tight, she whines and screams, “Why are you such a bitch?”

Exercise #2.1

In order to communicate clearly, in terms our children can understand, we have to avoid vague descriptions. Choose whether each of the descriptions below is specific or vague.

<i>Specific</i>	<i>Which one?</i>	<i>Vague</i>
	“Danny has such a lousy attitude about school.”	
	“Manuel, you were a good boy at the store today.”	
	“Sarah, you need to stop talking now.”	
	“Ramon, why can’t you act your age when we go out in public?”	
	“Steve, you played with your cars instead of getting dressed, and now you’re ten minutes late.”	
	“Heather, you are a spoiled brat.”	
	“Katie, thanks for sitting still and not talking in church.”	
	“Maria was very well behaved when her friend was here.”	
	“When I told you that you couldn’t have an ice cream, you looked at the floor and mumbled ‘Why not?’”	
	“Gee, Tom, what got into you?”	
	“Cody, I want you to calm down right now.”	
	“Joshua pushed Andy down when they were playing outside.”	