



## Can You Hear Me Now? 5 Ways to Get Your Child to Listen

By Leslie Garisto from Parents Magazine

It's also a method of dealing with new pressures and responsibilities. "Kids this age spend most of the school day following instructions," says Carla Fick, Psy.D., a child psychologist and clinical director of the nonprofit Smart Love Family Services, in Chicago. "School is more demanding, so they have fewer opportunities to zone out, de-stress, and exercise their own choices." Because they feel safest at home, it's the place they're most likely to assert themselves and take the time they need to chill out. Often, the way they do that is by acting as if their parents have faded into the furniture. However, you can regain your child's ear without losing your voice or your cool just by listening to our advice -- no bullhorn necessary.

### Choose the message.

Before you get yourself embroiled in a battle of wills, make sure you're concentrating on the things that really matter. Seven-year-old Bodhi Menice, of Corrales, New Mexico, has a talent for ignoring his mother, Danielle, when she asks him to do something he'd rather not do. So she weighs the importance of her requests. "If it's something essential, like setting the table before we sit down for dinner, then I'll make sure he gets it done," she says. If not, she'll either let it go or wait until later. "Because kids this age often feel overwhelmed, they're more likely to listen and cooperate if they feel that parents are only asking them to do the really important things," says Dr. Fick. Critical tasks like [homework](#) and family chores can take precedence over smaller issues that pop up during the day, like a pair of sneakers kicked off in the hallway or a candy wrapper that's fallen shy of the trash can.

### Listen to your child.

Sometimes, kids don't pay attention because they feel like no one's paying attention to them. "Parents are often so busy themselves that they don't always focus on things they consider to be insignificant, but those may be the very things that matter most to a child," says Dr. Fick. Harry Potter may be the last person you want to discuss at the end of a rough day, but what's going on at Hogwarts could be as important to her as her unfinished [homework](#) is to you. When kids feel cared about, understood, and respected by you, they're a lot more likely to hear what you have to say.

*Originally published in the April 2011 issue of Parents magazine.*

