






Why give children choices?

-  Children realize they have some control or power, which increases their self-esteem.
-  Children learn that they can make decisions and solve problems.
-  Children learn to say what they want or how they feel.
-  Children hear new words.
-  Children learn to repeat new words.

What kinds of choices can children make?

What...

- What game do you want to play?
- Do you want juice or milk?

When...

- Do you want to phone grandma before or after lunch?
- You can do your coloring now or later.

Where...

- You can play with your cars in the bedroom or outside.
- Do you want to go to the park or the library?

How...

- Would you rather hop or skip to the bathroom?
- Do you want to color or cut paper?



Things to think about when giving children choices:

- Only provide choices that are safe. (E.g.: “Do you want to hold this hand or the other one when we cross the street?”)
- Avoid “if” statements. (E.g.: “You can play a quiet game in the living room or play ball outside” vs “If you keep playing ball in the living room you will have to go outside.”)
- Only give choices that you can follow through on. (E.g.: “If you want the child to drink milk, offer milk or nothing.”)
- The choice must be appropriate for the child’s age. (E.g.: A 2½ year old cannot decide what time to go to bed at night, although you may ask if he wants to come in now or in 15 minutes.)
- Wait for the child to make a choice. It may take a bit of extra time.

Be creative – give children as many opportunities to make choices as possible!