

Pivotal Practices in Early Childhood: Expectations and Rules

What Are They:

Expectations are general characteristics or ways you would like children to behave. Rules define how you would like children to behave in various settings. When rules and expectations are clearly defined and children understand how rules and expectations are connected, they are less likely to have challenging behavior.

How To Do It:

1. Choose 2-5 simple expectations with pictures/symbols
2. Create 3-5 clear, positive rules for each activity (e.g., In hallway: "Use walking feet"; During play: "Take turns")
3. Teach expectations and rules by modeling desired behavior and providing children many opportunities to learn practice
4. Review rules before activities — *Tip: Have children help develop rules for new activities*
5. Support individual needs with clear reminders and visuals (e.g., "Walking feet"; "Gentle touches")
6. Notice and give specific feedback that connects actions to expectations (e.g., "By waiting your turn, you were responsible")



**We Are
Safe**



**We Are
Kind**

Ready, Set, Implement:

Connecting Expectations and Rules

Expectation	Rule	Model & Practice	Feedback
I will be safe	Hands to self	Sitting at group time with hands in lap	"Keeping your hands to yourself helps keep everyone safe"
I will be kind	Share and take turns	Requesting and giving turns with toys at free play	"That was so kind of you to share the toy with your friend."
I will be responsible	Clean up	Throwing trash away after snack	"Thank you for throwing your napkin away. That is being responsible"

Cut out the APP strip and place it in visible spots. These prompts serve as reminders to use the practice regularly and consistently.



Action Practice Prompts (APPs): Expectations and Rules



Instruct

**Develop,
Practice
Expectations
& Rules**



Review

**Preview Rules &
Offer Individual
Assistance When
Needed**



Praise

**Offer Feedback
to Reinforce
Expectations &
Rules**