

When Praise Helps – Or Hurts

Effective praise:

- Is linked to student accomplishment.
- Specifies details of the student's accomplishment.
- Suggests the teacher has paid clear attention to the accomplishment.
- Rewards the student for attaining specified criteria.
- Conveys to the student the value of accomplishment.
- Attributes success to the student's effort and ability and implies that similar success can be expected in the future.
- Encourages the student to perform the task because he or she enjoys it or wants to develop skills associated with the task.

Ineffective Praise:

- Is delivered inconsistently.
- Is vague and doesn't specify the particulars of the student's accomplishment.
- Is bland, suggesting the teacher often gives such praise.
- Rewards mere participation, without considering the student's performance.
- Gives the student no information about the relevance of the accomplishment.
- Attributes the student's success to ability alone or to external factors such as luck or ease.
- Encourages the student to perform the task for external reasons – to please the teacher or win a competition or reward.

Source: The Executive Educator, October 1992 Adapted from Brophy, J. E. "Teacher Praise: A Functional Analysis" Review of Educational Research, 1981, 51 (1): 5-32.