



Free from UrusFamily

Talk So They Hear You

30 phrases to replace nagging,
for parents of children aged 2 to 8



Before you start

This ebook is for parents and grandparents who are tired of repeating the same instructions every day. It is not about being a perfect parent. It is about changing a few sentences, one at a time.

How to use it

- One chapter a week. Do not try everything at once.
- Pick the one phrase that fits your home best, and say it this week.
- Fill in the worksheet at the end of each chapter. A pencil is enough.
- Slipped back into nagging? That is fine. Go back to your child and try again.

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The ideas here come from a well known parenting book (see Further reading), rewritten in our own words for Malaysian homes. This is not medical advice.

Feelings first



A child who is angry or upset cannot take in instructions. When the feeling is brushed off, for example "**It doesn't hurt**", the crying usually gets louder. When the feeling is named, the child feels understood and calms down sooner.

Children aged 2 to 8 do not have many words for emotions yet. Each time you name a feeling, you are teaching them one. Accepting feelings does not mean allowing every behaviour: all feelings are fine, some actions need limits.

Six phrases to try

1 So frustrating when the tower falls.

Name the feeling in one sentence.

2 Oh... mm... really?

Listen first. Advice can wait.

3 You're disappointed your friend didn't come.

Instead of "Crying over that?"

4 I wish we had an ice cream as big as this table!

Grant the wish in fantasy when the answer is no.

5 You can be angry. No hitting. Let's draw that angry.

Accept the feeling, limit the action.

6 You want to keep playing. The problem is, it's nearly maghrib.

Drop the "but". Say "the problem is".

At the shop

Supermarket checkout. Aisyah, 4, spots a toy car.

Before

Aisyah: I want that toy! I want it!

Mum: No. We have so many toys at home.

Aisyah lies on the floor and screams.

Mum: People are looking. Get up or I'll leave you here.

The crying gets louder. Mum carries Aisyah out.

After

Aisyah: I want that toy! I want it!

Mum: (crouches to eye level) You really like that blue car.

Aisyah: I like it! I want it!

Mum: I wish this shop let us take home a whole trolley of cars!

Aisyah: (giggles) The red one too.

Mum: The red one too. We're not buying toys today. I'll put it on your wish list, and we'll look again on your birthday.

Aisyah grumbles, but holds Mum's hand to the counter.

What changed?

- Mum still did not buy it. The limit stayed the same.
- Aisyah felt heard first, so she did not need to scream to be understood.
- If your child keeps crying, sit with them and name the feeling once more. Do not buy to stop the tears.

Our family feelings dictionary

Write situations that keep happening at home, guess the feeling, and prepare one sentence.

Word bank

frustrated

disappointed

worried

scared

embarrassed

jealous

tired

bored

sad

excited

proud

relieved

When this happens

My child may feel

My sentence

Little sister touches his Lego	frustrated	So annoying when someone touches your build.

Once a day, name your child's feeling before correcting. Tick each day:

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

Sun

Describe, don't nag



Long lectures like "**How many times do I have to tell you?**" make children stop listening after a few words. Sarcasm, threats and comparing them with a sibling or cousin attack the child, not the problem.

Try describing what you see. When a child hears the problem without blame, there is room to work out what to do. That is where responsibility starts. Move to the next phrase only if the one before did not work.

Six phrases to try

7 There's a wet towel on the bed.

Describe what you see, without "you".

8 Wet towels make the mattress smell.

Give information. Skip the sarcasm.

9 Shoes!

One word. Not your child's name.

10 My patience is the size of a mung bean right now.

Say how you feel without attacking.

11 Towel: "Please hang me up!"

A picture note on the door. Read it together.

12 This school bag is hungry. It wants to eat books!

Play works well with young children.

School morning

6.45 am, morning session. Danish, 7, in Year 1. The school van comes at 6.55.

Before

Dad: Danish! Where are your shoes? How many times do I have to say it, put them on the rack!

Danish: Don't know...

Dad: Always "don't know". Look at your sister, ready ages ago. Any later and I'm leaving you.

Danish sulks and searches slowly.

After

Dad: Ten minutes until the van. Shoes aren't at the door yet.

Danish: Oh no.

Dad: Left shoe is under the sofa. I can't see the right one.

Danish: (crawls under the table) Found it!

Dad: Bag!

Danish: (puts on his bag) Ready!

Dad: Shoes, bag, water bottle. All done before the van.

What changed?

- Dad talked about shoes and time, not about Danish's character.
- Fewer words, more action.
- That afternoon they put a shoe basket by the door. Sometimes it is the house that needs changing.

Turn nagging into describing

Write the lecture you repeat most, then a describing version and a one word version.

My nag	Describe it	One word
How many times, hang up your towel!	There's a wet towel on the bed.	Towel!

Change the home, not the child

- ☐ Low hooks for towels and bags
- ☐ A shoe basket by the door
- ☐ Toy baskets labelled with pictures
- ☐ Tomorrow's clothes laid out tonight



Do it in UrusFamily

Write chores as information, for example **"Shoes on the rack before the van"**. Your child ticks it off when done, so you do not have to repeat yourself. Points follow the size of the job, from 1 for a tiny chore to 5 for a big one.

Give choices



Young children are learning that they can control things. When the whole day is a string of orders, they push back to feel that control. Small choices, where you are happy with both, give them control without giving up the limit.

"No" can change too. The same limit can come out as **"Yes, after..."**. Your child still waits, but hears a way forward instead of a closed door.

Six phrases to try

13 Red shirt or blue?

Two options you are happy with.

14 Bath before dinner or after?

Choose when, not whether.

15 Yes, after we eat we'll go to the park.

Instead of "No, you haven't eaten."

16 Want to scoop it yourself or shall I help?

Let them do it when they can.

17 That is hard. Tiny buttons are stubborn.

Respect the effort. Instead of "That's easy."

18 Let me think. I'll answer after Asar.

Take time before you answer.

Mealtime

Dinner. Hana, 3, does not want vegetables and wants the tablet.

Before

Mum: Hana, eat your vegetables. Finish them.

Hana: No! I want the tablet.

Mum: No! No tablet until you finish. Other people have no food, you know.

Hana pushes the plate away and cries.

After

Mum: Tonight there's broccoli and carrots. Which one do you want to try first?

Hana: Neither.

Mum: Broccoli looks like little trees. Big spoon or small spoon?

Hana: Yellow spoon. (takes one piece of broccoli)

Hana: I want the tablet!

Mum: Yes, after dinner and brushing teeth, you can watch one episode. You pick which.

What changed?

- Hana ate only two pieces. That is fine: tonight's goal is a calm table, not a clean plate.
- The tablet still comes after dinner. The limit did not change, only how it sounded.
- If your child will not choose, choose calmly for them: "Today I'll pick."

Choices I can live with

For each time of day that turns into a battle, write two options you are happy with.

Time	Option A	Option B
School morning	Bread	Fried bihun
Mealtime		
Bath		
Bedtime		
At the shop		

Three "no"s I will turn around

No...	Yes, after...
No playing, you haven't bathed.	Yes, after your bath we'll play.

Solve it together



When siblings fight, our instinct is to find who started it and punish. Punishment stops the fight for now, but children think more about how unfair it felt than about how to put things right.

For a problem that keeps coming back, sit down and solve it together once everyone is calm. Children as young as three can offer ideas, and they follow a plan they helped make. If someone is hurt or in danger, separate them first. Talk later.

Six phrases to try

- 19 I don't need to know who did it. Let's fix it.**
Look forward, not for a culprit.
- 20 I'm putting the blocks away. Thrown blocks can hit faces.**
Act to protect, with no punishment timer.
- 21 Two people, one tablet. That's tricky.**
Describe the problem, not the person.
- 22 What ideas do you two have?**
Let the children go first.
- 23 Let's write down every idea, even the silly ones.**
No judging while you collect ideas.
- 24 Sorry means doing it differently next time.**
For the child who apologises, then repeats.

Sibling fights

Saturday afternoon. Irfan, 7, and Alya, 4, fight over one tablet. Nenek is in the living room.

Before

Alya: Abang won't let me!

Irfan: She keeps bothering me! I was first!

Mum: Who started it? You're both the same. I'm taking the tablet. No tablet for a week!

Both cry. The next afternoon, the same fight starts again.

After

Mum: (once everyone is calm) Every afternoon there's a fight about the tablet. Two people, one tablet. That's tricky.

Irfan: Alya takes it when I'm in the middle of a game.

Mum: You get annoyed when your game stops halfway.

Alya: I want to play too!

Mum: You want a turn too. What ideas do we have?

Irfan: Use a timer. Fifteen minutes each.

Alya: I pick a song when we swap!

Mum: I'll write both down. We'll try them this week and check on Sunday.

What changed?

- No week-long punishment, but a plan both children know.
- Mum named Irfan's feeling before asking for ideas.
- If the plan fails, sit down again and fix the plan. Do not go back to punishing.

A 10 minute problem solving session

For one problem that keeps coming back. Start only when everyone is calm.

The problem Describe it without naming a culprit.

My child's feelings Spend the most time here.

My feelings One or two sentences only.

Every idea, no judging

1	2
3	4
5	6

The idea we will try

Who does what, and when we check again



Do it in UrusFamily

Save what you agreed as a **House rule**, for example "Tablet: 15 minutes each, swap when the timer rings". Everyone taps Got it. If you fill in the consequence field, write a way to make things right, not a punishment. **Family meeting** keeps a topic list and a place for the outcome.

Praise that describes



"Clever!" and "Beautiful!" are easy to say, but they do not tell a child what they did well. Praise that judges can also make a child nervous about trying again. Describe what you see or how you feel, then stop. Often your child will praise themselves.

In a big family, praise and labels also come from grandparents and relatives. You can gently offer a new picture of your child in front of them, without contradicting your elders.

Six phrases to try

- 25 All the buttons done up, and your shoes on the right feet.**

Describe what you see.

- 26 It's lovely walking into this room.**

Describe how you feel.

- 27 That's what being independent looks like.**

Name the strength in a word.

- 28 You must be proud of yourself.**

Instead of "I'm proud of you."

- 29 Mak, Aiman carried his own plate today.**

Let your child overhear praise about them.

- 30 He'll salam when he's ready.**

Answer the "shy" label with respect.

Bedtime, with Nenek at home

After Isyak. Aiman, 5, has just tidied his toys. Nenek lives with the family.

Before

Mum: What a clever boy!

Nenek: That's more like it. When Mak Long came he just hid. This boy is so shy.

Mum: Aiman, next time salam people. You embarrassed Nenek.

Aiman goes quiet and looks down.

After

Mum: Lego in the box, cars in the basket, books lined up. It's lovely walking into this room.

Aiman: I did it myself. Nobody told me!

Mum: That's what being responsible looks like.

Nenek: When Mak Long came he just hid. This boy is so shy.

Mum: (smiles) Aiman takes a little time with new people, Mak. He'll salam when he's ready. This morning he brought you your coffee, didn't he?

Nenek: Yes, he did.

What changed?

- Mum did not argue with Nenek. She offered a new picture of Aiman.
- Aiman overheard adults talking about his strengths.
- Describing works for small jobs too: "Your plate is in the sink."

A 7 day praise journal

Each day, write one thing your child did and your describing sentence.

Day	What my child did	My describing sentence
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

One label I want to let go of

Label for example: stubborn

Its good side for example: persistent

Proof this week



Do it in UrusFamily

Send your child a **Kudos** (thank you) with a reason that describes, up to 60 characters, for example "Lined up the shoes without being asked". Grandparents added as relatives can give kudos too. Kudos carry no points: they are recognition, not payment.



What about points and rewards?

The book behind this ebook is wary of conditional rewards like "Be good and I'll buy you something". The argument: when a child does something for a prize, they may stop when the prize stops. Parenting experts do not agree on this, and some other programmes use rewards carefully.

UrusFamily has points, rewards and an option to take points back. So we want to be honest about how we suggest you use them.

Points work well for

- Making contributions to the home visible, like real chores.
- One family goal that everyone fills together.
- Older children learning to save and wait.

Avoid points for

- Buying behaviour mid-tantrum: "Stop crying and you'll get points."
- Feelings. Never give or take points because a child cries, gets angry or is scared.
- Saying sorry, sharing and speaking kindly. Let those come from the relationship, not a price.
- Taking points away as punishment for young children. Try fixing it together first (Chapter 4).

If your child starts asking "How many points?" for everything, that is your sign to use fewer points and more describing and thank yous.

30 phrases for the fridge

Print this page and stick it where you usually nag.

1. Feelings first

- 1 So frustrating when the tower falls.
- 2 Oh... mm... really?
- 3 You're disappointed your friend didn't come.
- 4 I wish we had an ice cream as big as this table!
- 5 You can be angry. No hitting. Let's draw that angry.
- 6 You want to keep playing. The problem is, it's nearly maghrib.

3. Give choices

- 13 Red shirt or blue?
- 14 Bath before dinner or after?
- 15 Yes, after we eat we'll go to the park.
- 16 Want to scoop it yourself or shall I help?
- 17 That is hard. Tiny buttons are stubborn.
- 18 Let me think. I'll answer after Asar.

5. Praise that describes

- 25 All the buttons done up, and your shoes on the right feet.
- 26 It's lovely walking into this room.
- 27 That's what being independent looks like.
- 28 You must be proud of yourself.
- 29 Mak, Aiman carried his own plate today.
- 30 He'll salam when he's ready.

2. Describe, don't nag

- 7 There's a wet towel on the bed.
- 8 Wet towels make the mattress smell.
- 9 Shoes!
- 10 My patience is the size of a mung bean right now.
- 11 Towel: "Please hang me up!"
- 12 This school bag is hungry. It wants to eat books!

4. Solve it together

- 19 I don't need to know who did it. Let's fix it.
- 20 I'm putting the blocks away. Thrown blocks can hit faces.
- 21 Two people, one tablet. That's tricky.
- 22 What ideas do you two have?
- 23 Let's write down every idea, even the silly ones.
- 24 Sorry means doing it differently next time.

Further reading

Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, **How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk**, 30th anniversary edition, Scribner, 2012.

This ebook is written in our own words, based on ideas from that book, and adapted for Malaysian homes with children aged 2 to 8. It is not an official summary and is not connected to the authors or the publisher. If these ideas help, read the original.

On the UrusFamily site

Chores without nagging

urusfamily.com/en/chores-without-nagging

Chores by age guide

urusfamily.com/en/guide

What this ebook is not

- It is not medical or psychological advice. The stories in the source book are mostly parents' experiences, not controlled studies.
- If you are worried about your child's development, speech or emotions, or about anyone's safety at home, get help from a doctor, counsellor or child specialist.
- This ebook does not cover religious rulings on raising children. For those, ask an ustaz or ustazah you trust.

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Keep going in UrusFamily



UrusFamily is a family app for housework, points and shared goals, built in Malaysia.

This ebook, inside the app

Chores with points

Chores written as information, ticked off by your child (Chapter 2).

House rules and meetings

Save what you agreed in a problem solving session (Chapter 4).

Kudos

A thank you with a reason that describes (Chapter 5).

Gift wishlist

Write down your child's wishes without promising to buy (Chapter 1).

Children need no account: a kid profile sits under a parent and opens with a PIN. No ads. Free during the launch period, then RM 9.90 a month or RM 79 a year for the whole family.

Scan with your phone camera, or tap the link.



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