10 TIPS FOR GIVING EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Somewhere along the line, you are going to have to tell another person how to perform a task. Whether teaching your kids how to use the dishwasher or training new staff at work, your ability to give good instructions will affect the speed at which they learn.

If you explain things properly, you only have to do it once. Explain things poorly and you will have to do it again. You might even need to fix things that were done wrong. Here are some tips to make sure you communicate instructions effectively:

1. Get people's attention. Before giving any instructions, make sure you have the attention of those who should be listening.
2. Be clear and specific about what you want. Break the task down into step-by-step procedures.
3. If you're unsure whether or not people have really understood you, have them repeat your message using their own words.
4. Demonstrate or illustrate whenever possible.
5. Only give a small number of instructions at any one time. People have trouble remembering large amounts of information. For more complex tasks, break-down the instructions to each part of the job.
6. Use direct and specific language. Say exactly what you mean. Don't leave people guessing.
7. Don't rush your instructions. Clear directions save time.
8. Avoid misunderstandings by asking the person how they'll approach the issue or task and why. Have them repeat your instructions when you're finished.
9. Don't get side tracked by excuses or disagreements. Restate your instructions one more time if necessary.
10. Check back during the initial stages. Give people room to do what you expect of them, but be available to help when needed.