

Section 5:

How do I communicate using TCD?

TCD language helps parents and children communicate about choices, behaviors, and consequences. TCD uses a standard communication as follows:

*“You have two choices. You may... (state first choice)
or you may... (state second choice).
Make a good choice now.”*

In just a moment, we will illustrate how a dialogue using two choice language might proceed. First, however, let's break down the essential elements of TCD language.

1. Always begin your communication by acknowledging WHO is responsible for the choice. Use the personal pronoun, “You.” This identifies who will make the choice and assume responsibility for the consequences that follow. “YOU have two choices.”
2. Identify only two choice options at once. Providing only two choices helps to avoid confusion that will delay your child's response. The TCD language is, “You may (state the first choice) or you may (state the second choice).”
3. Name an acceptable time period for making the choice. End your statement using a “release word” to indicate when the child should stop listening and make the choice. A common release word is “now,” but other words may be used such as “in ten minutes” or “after lunch.” You may say, “Make a good choice now,” meaning the child must choose at that moment.

A sample dialogue may sound like this:

“You have two choices. You may ... (state first option) or you may... (second option). Make a good choice now.”

Hopefully the child makes a choice selecting one of the two choice options. If so, then you say:

*“You chose... (name the choice).
Thanks for making a good choice.”*

If the child does not choose one of the two options (either the child tries to bargain for a different option, complains, or otherwise fails to respond), then you restate the choices concisely, naming only the options:

“Choose... (first option) or ... (second option) now, please.”

If the child still does not make a choice within given options or does not appear willing to choose, then you say:

*“You did not make a choice, so I will choose for you.
You may (name one of your two choices).”*

If the child purposely refuses to choose or directly challenges authority, you say:

“You did not make a choice, so you have no choice now.”
(Parent redirects the child to another activity or disengages and ends conversation.)

Also, you may need to apply a consequence if the child fails to respond properly and accept your choice. The language for applying consequences is discussed in Section 7.2.

Points to remember regarding TCD communication:

- Use TCD language consistently. The repetition allows your child to focus on the choice options and make a decision quickly.
- Respond personally by maintaining eye contact to demonstrate your attention. Move closer to the child, speaking quietly and using a low voice tone. Use your behavior to model how to listen and speak respectfully.
- Listen carefully and completely to all information before responding. Offer reasonable and “do-able” choice options that can be provided. Resist making hasty judgments or assigning consequences you cannot enforce.
- Follow through consistently and completely with all assigned consequences without compromising, bargaining, bribing or nagging.

Suggestions for voice tone and word choice:

- Use a personal, positive tone when presenting *choices*. Use a non-emotional, matter-of-fact tone when presenting *consequences*.
- Use a low, self-controlled voice, speaking only loud enough for your child to hear.
- State choices and consequences positively and avoid nagging or threatening.
- Use few words to present choices. Keep your language simple and focused on your point, meaning more but speaking with less words.