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## Handling Directions

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**5. Use a variety of words in giving directions.** This provides practice and familiarization with various kinds of directions. *Circle, cross out, underline, match, complete, list, check, and write* are some direction words which can be used.

**6. Provide an opportunity for students to follow a direction with a negative in it.** (e.g., Circle the word that does NOT belong with the others.)

**7. Provide an opportunity for students to follow a series of**

**written directions.** Write a work plan on the chalkboard. Include the name of the materials to be used, the pages and the specific tasks you wish to be completed. You can number the tasks if you want them to be done in a prescribed order.

Have students write shopping lists. (e.g., **Write** the names of five people you have on your gift list. List two items you might buy for each person. **Identify** the store where you will look for each item. **Specify** the amount of money you intend to spend on each person.)

**8. Have students comply with directions on standardized examinations.** Copy directions and sample questions onto a handout. Follow this procedure with as many different

examinations as you can find. It is better to emphasize correctly complying with the directions rather than correctly answering the sample questions. Students will find the test situation much less threatening if they are familiar with this aspect of test taking.

**9. Provide students with the opportunity to fill out various application forms.** Every space on a form is a direction even if it is a single word. Students must pay careful attention to the smallest detail. A statement such as "PLEASE PRINT" can be a problem.

Possible forms that can be used are: job applications, driver's license, admission applications to training programs and schools, housing applications, marriage licenses, etc.

### A Sample Exercise

The following exercise has been around in one form or another for a long time. Still, it may be new to your students and provides useful (and entertaining) practice in following directions.

#### Can You Follow Directions?

This is a test to see if you can follow directions. You have three minutes.

#### DIRECTIONS

1. Read everything before doing anything.
2. Put your name in the upper right corner of this paper.
3. Circle the word *name* in sentence two.
4. Draw five small squares in the upper left corner of this paper.

5. Sign your name under the title.
6. After the title, write "Yes, Yes, Yes."
7. Put a circle around each word in sentence five.
8. Put an "x" in the lower left corner of this paper.
9. Draw a triangle around the "x" you just wrote.
10. If you think that you have followed all the directions up to this point, call out "I have."
11. Draw a rectangle around the word "paper" in sentence four.
12. Call out your first name when you get to this point in the test.
13. On the reverse side of this paper multiply 729 by 2048.
14. Put a circle around your answer. Put a square around the circle.
15. In your normal speaking voice count out loud backwards from ten to one.
16. Now that you have finished reading carefully, do only sentence two.

You have finished. How did you do?

#### About the Author

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# "What Do I Have To Do?"

## A Guide to Handling Directions

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Students' performance of any given task is to a great degree dependent on their ability to follow directions. Although following directions is not always considered a "comprehension skill," its usefulness for students both at home and at school makes it worthy of consideration. It is generally agreed that students perform more competently when they are able to follow both oral and written directions. The following are suggestions which will assist teachers in helping students achieve this goal:

**1. Spend some time going over the vocabulary used in directions.** Don't assume that because a student knows the meaning of a word in one situation, s/he will be able to apply it in another.

**2. Have students repeat in their own words what is required of them.** After directions are read silently, have a student explain what is meant. Students should then reread the directions. Don't allow a student to proceed if s/he is uncertain of what is expected.

**3. Make directions to the point and furnish an example.** This is important when writing teacher-prepared materials. Avoid redundant and extraneous language.

**4. Simplify directions.** Do not use more than one direction in a sentence. A direction should be clearly understood before going on to the next direction.

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