



Using Precorrection at Home: A Step-by-Step Guide for Families

What is precorrection?

Precorrection is a proactive strategy to support behavior. The strategy is used when adults identify predictable times when children and youth may benefit from additional guidance or support. With the use of precorrection, adults can shift from responding *after* a challenging behavior occurs with negative consequences (e.g., a reprimand) to preventing the challenging behavior by reminding students of expectations *before* entering an environment or activity. One example of using precorrection is when an adult reminds a child to leave their phone in their room or other location before coming to the table for dinner.

How do I use this strategy at home?

In the table below, we provide the steps for how to get started with precorrection at home. Following the steps are two examples, one for younger children and one for older youth.

Step	Description
Step 1	Identify a time during the day or a specific activity when your child tends to need more of your direction or supervision.
Step 2	Determine the expected behavior you would like to see from your child.
Step 3	Check the space to see if the environment needs some adjustments to set the stage for the desired behavior to occur.
Step 4	Provide opportunities for your child to practice the desired behaviors.
Step 5	Acknowledge your child when they engage in the expected behaviors.
Step 6	Develop a plan to remind your child about the expected behavior before they begin the activity or enter the location.
Step 7	Watch to see how your child responds when you “precorrect” to see if it is helpful.
Step 8	Ask your child what they think about “precorrection.” Is it helping them have a more positive day?

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For additional information see:

Lane, K. L., Menzies, H. M., Ennis, R. P., & Oakes, W. P. (2015). Supporting behavior for school success: A step-by-step guide to key strategies. New York, NY: Guilford Press.



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Example. With my elementary-age child

Step 1. Sylvia is having difficulty cleaning up her toys after her afternoon playtime. She is excited to move on to helping her siblings set the table for dinner. However, her toys are then left in the living room during family evening time and this causes her parents frustration.

Step 2. Sylvia's parents' expectation is that all the children put their things away when they are finished (technology, toys, school materials).

Step 3. Sylvia's parents reviewed the living room where Sylvia plays in the afternoons. They noticed that there were not containers or shelves in that area for Sylvia to put the toys. She needed to take them upstairs to put them away. They decided to make space on the bottom shelf of the bookcase in the room and put a covered basket next to the bookcase of toys.

Step 4. Sylvia's parents showed her the new storage space. Then, to provide Sylvia some practice before cleaning up on her own, her brother offered to help her take all the toys out and then help her put them away.

Step 5. Sylvia's parents and brother praised her for cleaning up the toys. "Thank you for picking up your toys! Look how much space we have to play a game after dinner together."

Step 6. Before the start of each afternoon playtime, one of Sylvia's parents or her brother reminded her of the expectation. "Have fun playing, Sylvia, and remember to put your toys on the shelf or in the bucket before you come to help set the table for dinner."

Step 7. To make sure that the daily clean up precorrection was helpful, Sylvia's parents decided to draw an orange star (Sylvia's favorite color) on the calendar each day she remembered to pick up her toys at the end of playtime. Making the star on the calendar helped remind them to use precorrection and let them know if it was helpful.

Step 8. At the end of the first week, when her parents were adding the orange star to the calendar on Friday later afternoon, they asked Sylvia if it was helpful for them to remind her of the clean-up expectation each day.



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Example. With my middle or high school child ...

Step 1. Nathan seems to be having a tough time working through his statistics assignments. He tends to frequently check his phone and respond to texts as they pop up.

Step 2. It would be great if Nathan would focus on completing his work in full before responding to texts and social media.

Step 3. His parents decided to adjust his environment by saying, “Hey, bud, to help you stay focused and finish your stats work accurately and quickly, let’s plan to leave your phone charging in the kitchen so it is ready to use when you are finished.”

Step 4. His parents then set the routine of Nathan plugging in his phone in the charging station before he goes to the kitchen table to do his assignments. Nathan created a visual reminder and printed three copies. He placed one on the cover of his statistics notebook, one on the table in his work area, and another by the charging station in the kitchen.

Step 5. Nathan’s parents acknowledged his efforts to remove the distraction of his phone from his homework area. They said, “Nathan, we appreciate you being open to plugging your phone in to charger before going to the table to complete your statistics homework. That will help you do your best work and complete your assignment more efficiently.”

Step 6. To remind Nathan of the new routine for his work time, after breakfast one of his parents would say something like the following before he started his work time: “Thanks for remembering to put your phone on the charger in the kitchen before heading in to do your statistics assignments!”

Step 7. Nathan and his parents talked about how to see if this new routine was helping him complete his stats homework more accurately and quickly. Nathan decided to keep a daily chart of how long it took to do his homework and the score he earned. At the end of each week, he would share the graph with his parents for feedback (encouragement and problem solving if needed).

Step 8. At the end of the week when they reviewed the graph Nathan created, they also discussed how the new routine was working for Nathan. They could then make adjustments as needed. For example, for longer stats assignments, Nathan suggested it would be helpful for him if he could take a break part way through and check his phone in the kitchen before returning to his complete his assignment.