Directive statements are effective ways of getting our message across if we use them appropriately. Some guidelines include:

1. Give **positive** rather than negative statements.
   - Say “*walk on the footpath, thanks*” instead of “*don’t walk on the road*”
   - Say “*it’s task time now – please start your work*” rather than “*stop fooling and get on with it*”
   - Say “*put your hand up if you want to say or ask something*” rather than “*no talking*”

2. Keep the statement **clear** and **simple**.
   - Use the ‘rule of 5’ principle – only use five words per sentence / instruction: Say “*put the phone away – thanks*”
   - Avoid multiple commands e.g. "*get out your maths book and maths sets, page 34, numbers 3-5*. If you need to give multiple instructions, write them on board or give one / two at a time.

3. Use ‘**thanks**’ to convey an expectation that the request will be complied with.
   - “*Settling down, thanks*”
   - “*Looking this way, thanks*”

4. Get pupils’ **attention** first, then continue with the direction.
   - “*James, (pause and wait for acknowledgement) sit down please*”.

5. Have some **catch phrases** to get across key routines:
   - “*four on the floor*” – to get pupils to sit properly with all four chair legs on the ground
   - “*hands up if you’re listening*” – to bring pupils back to whole-class listening from group work
   - “*give of your best*” – motivate pupils to do the best they can do, to compete against only themselves

6. If a pupil is **agitated** / starting to get aggressive:
   - Lower your own tone / volume
   - Speak slowly, clearly, calmly but assertively.
   - Use the ‘broken record’ technique: repeat the instruction calmly if it has not been heeded.
   - Offer choice to the pupil: “you can choose to continue this behaviour or to get back to work. I hope you can make the correct choice”

7. Give **wait time** to the pupil – avoid criticising the pupil for not complying absolutely immediately with the request. Avoid “*do what you’re told and do it now!*”

8. Give **specific praise** or a non-verbal **affirming gesture** (e.g. nod, thumbs up) to the pupil once s/he complies with your direction. “*Thanks Jane, I’m glad you’re getting on with your work. Well done*”. 

Phone 1850 200 884  
www.sess.ie  
info@sess.ie