The Downtown **Little School**

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Offering Children Choices: Why? and When?

Choices can give your child an important sense of independence and control; they can also overwhelm your child. Choices can be an important limit-setting tool; but, on the negative side, they can also be a way of avoiding exerting your own very necessary authority. The frequency with which we offer children choices is a relatively modern phenomenon with pros and cons; think carefully about how you use choices as a parenting tool.

(Also remember: a good way to get children to make independent choices is to make sure they have time and space to play on their own!)

Some things to consider when offering a choice:

Is it really a choice? Are you ok with whatever answer your child gives?
"What would you like for breakfast?"
"Do you want to clean up now?"

Is the choice appropriate for a young child to make, or should the decision be up to the adult?
"Should we take a taxi home?"
"Do you want to sleep in your crib or get a new bed?"

Is your choice meant to set a limit? What if your child does not accept the choice?
"You can wear the red pants or the blue pants." Child: "I want my Halloween costume!"
"Do you want grilled cheese or PB&J for lunch?" Child: "No!"

Are you overusing choices? Do you find yourself expressing things as a choice or a question rather than a statement?
"Should we read a book?" (instead of "Pick a book for us to read.")
"Will you play on the slide or the swings?" (instead of "Go and play!")
"What should we do today?" (instead of "Let's go to the park!")