

Giving Effective Praise Rubric

Learning Objectives:

- Explain how to increase student motivation by giving praise
- Identify features of effective praise
- Apply strategies by responding to students through praise

Research Recommendation(s)

Research supports praising students when they achieve a goal, demonstrate perseverance, or are exhibiting a desired behavior. For this reason, on question 2, the most desired response is:

“Kevin, fantastic job solving the math problem. I’m impressed with your hard work in persevering through the problem!”

Studies show praise is most effective when it has certain qualities.

Praise should be:

- perceived as sincere, earned, and truthful.
- specific by giving details of what the student did well.
- immediate with praise given right after the student action.
- authentic and is not repeated often, such as “great job” which loses meaning and becomes predictable.
- focused on the learning process, not ability

(AJTutoring.com, 2022)

Giving students consistent, specific praise when they perform in a desired manner is important to motivate students and increase their engagement to learn. Expert tutors and research suggest giving praise that focuses on the process and not merely student ability. Process-focused praise recognizes students for putting forth effort and persevering through the learning process instead of focusing on whether a student got the problem correct or pure ability. Process-focused praise motivates students to learn and fosters a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008).

Some common examples of ability-focused praise are shown on the left in the table below with a corresponding more effective process-focused praise shown on the right. It is important to note that praise can be given throughout the learning process, not only upon getting the correct answer or finishing a problem or assignment. Oftentimes, encouragement and praise can be given while the student is going through the learning process to increase motivation and maintain engagement.

Ability-Focused Praise	Process-Focused Praise
“Great job! You are a genius!”	“Great job on solving that math problem. You persevered through solving by using a new math concept.”

“Fantastic! You are so talented!”	“I love how you tried very hard and focused on the problem!”
“You are so smart and almost got the problem correct.”	“You are almost there! I am proud of how you are persevering through and striving to solve the problem. Keep going!”

Experts believe that the best approach is Option B,

“Carla, you are doing a great job in continuing on the assignment. Your understanding is improving as we work through it.”

This approach recognizes Carla’s effort towards the math assignment and is process-focused.

PREDICT RESPONSES:

Correct (1): Tutor responses should be positive, specific, and encouraging, focusing on the learning process rather than just ability. Praise must acknowledge the student's effort, perseverance, or progress and should be sincere and authentic.

Incorrect (0): Generic praise such as "great job" or "well done" without details about what the student did well, or praise that lacks focus on the process, is considered incorrect. Responses must go beyond generic comments to acknowledge specific student actions and efforts.

Tutor response	Rationale
“You did a great job on that problem. Well done.”	0 The response is positive and sincere, however, does not focus on the process or praise specific student actions.
“Good job! Why don't we try solving a few more problems so that you feel confident about these questions?”	0 The response is positive and encouraging, however, it is not praising the student for persevering it is merely implying the more problems you do the more confident you become. This could be a partial credit problem but for consistency it is incorrect.

“It was difficult but you persevered and succeeded. Such grit is an important life skill and I'm proud of what you accomplished and you should be proud, too.”	1 The response is positive, sincere, and praises the student for persevering and acknowledges the students for working hard and the process of learning.
“You have done a good job so far. It is normal to feel challenged at this stage. Keep going.”	1 This response is slightly nuanced in that there is little emphasis on positivity and uses the generic “good job” phrase, however, it focuses on persevering despite being challenged.

EXPLAIN RESPONSES:

Rubric

Explained responses for giving effective praise

Key: focusing on the student learning process and their learning effort (perseverance, hard work paying off, keep insisting etc.)

Correct (1): The tutor's response demonstrates an understanding of the importance of focusing on specific details of what the student did well and focusing on the learning process

Incorrect (0): The tutor responses focus on the student's learning outcomes over effort/process, or are not related to praise.

Tutor response	Rationale
It is sincere and positive.	0 Sincerity is important, but praise must also be process-focused.
Carla will be more motivated and confident to continue completing her homework.	0 Motivation and confidence are a result of praising the student's effort or process, which this response does not directly address.

<p>It's important to praise the effort, rather than "smartness" since intelligence is often seen as an immutable trait. Learning takes effort, and it's that effort that you want them to repeat, so that's what you should praise.</p>	<p>1 Specifically discusses praising effort.</p>
<p>Encouraging progress through effort is the most beneficial approach. Growth mindset should be encouraged.</p>	<p>1 Mentions both effort and growth.</p>
<p>It shows you have noticed how much she has worked and you are willing to work on it together.</p>	<p>1 Directly addresses the student's work (process-focused).</p>
<p>Because she is feeling a self-worth and not a weak student.</p>	<p>0 Does not address importance of effort.</p>