

# Giving Effective Praise

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[Title]

Giving Effective Praise

[Competency]

Engage and Motivate Students

[Estimated Time]

12

[Undraw Key]

Stepping up



[Description]

When the learning gets tough, giving effective praise is a powerful strategy to encourage students to keep going.

[Learning Objectives]

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

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**Tutor's Experience Level:**

How would you describe your tutoring experience and skills?

Beginner tutor- 1 (no experience)

Expert tutor- 5

[\[Text\]](#)

**Scenario 1**

Before we get started, please answer the following questions to help determine what you already know.

You're tutoring a student named Kevin. He is struggling to understand a math problem. When he doesn't get the answer correct the first time, he wants to quit. After trying several different approaches, Kevin gets the problem correct. As Kevin's tutor, you want him to continue working through solving more problems on his math assignment.

[\[Image\]](#)



[\[image link\]](#)

Description: student at a laptop

[\[Question - Open Ended\]](#)

1. What exactly would you say to Kevin to provide effective praise that will increase his motivation to complete his math assignment and increase engagement?

[\[Question - MCQ\]](#)

2. Which of the following examples below, of feedback through praise, do you think would best support and increase Kevin's motivation to complete his math work and increase engagement?

I would say to the student:

- A. "Great job, Kevin! You are so smart!"
- B. "Fantastic job, Kevin! You are the smartest student I have ever met! I wish all students were as smart as you."
- C. "Kevin, great job on working through that problem. Next time, don't quit when you don't get it correct the first time!"
- D. **"Kevin, fantastic job solving the math problem. I'm impressed with your hard work in persevering through the problem!"**

[Question - Open Ended]

3. Why do you think the example of praise you selected in the prior question will best support and increase Kevin's motivation to complete his math work and increase engagement?

[Question - MCQ]

4. Which of the following statements aligns with the rationale you chose and explained in the previous two questions?

- A. **When you praise a student for their hard work and for putting in effort, you are focusing on the learning process and increasing their motivation to learn.**
- B. When you praise a student by telling them how much better they performed compared to others you are giving them a boost of confidence, which increases their motivation to learn.
- C. When you tell a student they are smart it gives them self-confidence, which increases their motivation to learn. Students need to have confidence in themselves in order to learn effectively.
- D. When you praise a student on what they did right, it is important to point out what they shouldn't do again so they don't make the mistake again.

[Text]

**Research says...**

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!”

#### [Question - Open Ended]

5. In your own words, please explain why it is important to praise students by providing process-focused praise instead of praising for getting the answer correct or giving ability-focused praise?

#### [Question - Likert]

6. How much do you agree or disagree with the expert belief of motivating students by giving process-focused praise instead of ability-focused praise?

1. Strongly disagree
2. Somewhat disagree
3. No opinion
4. Somewhat agree
5. Strongly agree

[Question - Open Ended]

7. Explain why you agree or disagree.

[Question - MCQ] Attention Checker: Pick one of the 4

8. To confirm you're paying attention, please select "Somewhat agree" below.

- A) Strongly disagree
- B) Somewhat disagree
- C) No opinion
- D) Somewhat agree**

[Text]

### **Scenario 2**

You are tutoring a student named Carla, who came to you for help with solving a story problem from her algebra homework. As her tutor, you are providing feedback and asking Carla prompting questions to help her solve the word problem. You are trying to encourage her to continue trying to solve the problem.

[Image]



[\[image link\]](#)

Description: student at a laptop

[\[Question - Open Ended\]](#)

9. What exactly would you say to Carla to provide effective praise that will increase her motivation to complete her math work and increase engagement?

[\[Question - MCQ\]](#)

10. Which of the following strategies below do you think would best support and increase Carla's motivation to complete her assignment and increase engagement?

I would say to the student:

- A. "Carla, we really need to continue this assignment. You can't quit on me now. Keep going!"
- B. **"Carla, you are doing a great job in continuing on the assignment. Your understanding is improving as we work through it."**
- C. "Carla, you are doing a fantastic job! Don't quit like some of my other students do when they have assignments."
- D. "Carla, you are the best student! I know you can finish this assignment as you are the smartest student I work with."

[\[Question - Open Ended\]](#)

11. Why do you think the approach you selected in the above question will best support and increase Carla's motivation to complete her math work and increase engagement?

[\[Question - MCQ\]](#)

12. Which of the following statements aligns with the rationale you chose and explained in the previous two questions?

- A. When you provide encouragement and praise to students while working to solve problems, you are emphasizing to students that they can learn.**
- B. When you praise a student by telling them they are smart you are providing a boost of confidence and increasing their self-esteem. This encourages students to work hard.
- C. As a tutor, when you tell a student they are smarter than other students you are encouraging the student to continue to work hard and motivates them to learn.
- D. When you praise a student for what they did right, it is crucial that tutors point out exactly what the students did wrong so they do not do it again.

[Text]

### **Conclusion & Feedback**

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.

For more information regarding how to give effective praise, check out the resources below:

[The Power of Effective Praise](#)

[How to Give Effective Praise in Tutoring](#)

[Tutoring Tips: How to Give Meaningful Praise](#)

References:

AJ Tutoring. (2022). How to Give Effective Praise. Retrieved from <https://www.ajtutoring.com/blog/effective-praise/>

Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.