



Helping Kids Thrive

A Guide for Parents and Carers

How to complete the survey with your child

The guidance provided here is good practice, not a checklist you have to follow.

Please do what works for you and your child - good enough is better than not at all.

You are best placed to do this

Parents and carers know their children best. You know how your child communicates, and what helps them feel safe enough to say what they really think.

That is why we are asking you to complete this survey with your child.

Your child's answers will inform the Voice of the Child Thriving Kids publication. This document will recommend that children should be included in decisions about what helps them to thrive.

Before you begin

1. Pick a good time and place

Choose a time when your child is fed, rested, and in a familiar and comfortable place. Allow about 15 minutes and provide snacks and fidgets if needed.

2. Explain the project in your own words

Read the survey introduction aloud, then check your child understands. You might want to say something like:

- *Australia's leaders have a new plan called Thriving Kids to help children whose brains and bodies work differently to others.*
- *Adults are making the decisions but children haven't been asked. Children's ideas should be included in a program made for them.*
- *We can't promise leaders will act on everything you say, but your answers will be used to speak up for kids.*

3. Ask for your child's assent

Your agreement is not enough on its own. Your child gets to decide too – you can say something like:

'Would you like to do this? It's completely okay to say no, and you can stop at any time.'

If your child says no, hesitates, or loses interest, they do not have to participate. A child's 'no' overrides an adult's 'yes', and they can change their mind at any point.



During the survey

Warm up first. Start with a relaxed chat before the questions. The first survey questions ask what your child likes doing at home and school, to let them ease in.

Do

- Read each question aloud in a warm, unhurried way.
- Record answers word for word.
- Let your child answer any way they like. If drawing, ask them to tell you about their drawing and write down what they say.
- Allow silence. Pauses can mean thinking, not refusal.
- Offer warm encouragement that is not tied to what they say, and probe with *'Can you tell me more?'*

Don't

- Suggest answers or offer your own examples. If your child is stuck, re-read the question.
- Correct or convert their answers into adult language.
- Show disappointment or disagreement, even if an answer surprises you.
- Push through reluctance, and don't stop without asking. Pause and let your child choose.

If your child gets upset

Many children enjoy being asked what they think, but some might find questions difficult.

- **Watch for a change** from your child's usual self. Distress does not always look like crying. It can look like going quiet, using fewer words, repeating a phrase, moving more, or turning away.
- **Offer a pause:** If you think they want to stop, you might like to say 'This seems tough. Do you want to skip this question, take a break or stop?' If you end the survey without asking, the child might think their feelings were a problem.
- **Comfort your child,** but leave their answer as it is. Try not to contradict them or soften their words when you write them down.
- **Stop.** Your child can stop at any time and what they have contributed up to that point will still be included.
- **Try again later.** If you have time, you might check in again later, or the following day.
- **Look after yourself.** Hearing your child describe something difficult can be upsetting for you.



If something worries you

The survey is anonymous, so we will not know who answered and cannot follow up. Please speak with your GP, your child's school wellbeing staff, or their existing support team if you have any concerns. [Kids Helpline](#) offers counselling by phone on 1800 55 1800 or webchat. [Lifeline](#) supports adults on 13 11 14.

Privacy

The survey is completely anonymous. No names or contact details are collected. Your child gets to choose a pretend name to use instead of their real one, which can be anything they like.

Wrapping up

1. Check in

‘How was that? Was there anything that felt tricky?’

2. Thank them

Children’s ideas are valuable and unique. We could not do this without them.

3. Share next steps

Once lots of children have answered we will share a report of what everyone said in about two months.

Questions?

Contact Rachel Parker, Voice of the Child Foundations Lead at rachel.parker@mcri.edu.au

All principles drawn from the MCRI [Voice of the Child Toolkit](#) and the [Lundy Model of Child Participation](#) (2007).

