

The Praise Playbook

Feedback that builds a confident speaker

The one-nudge rule

- 1 React first. Show them you listened: laugh, gasp, or ask a real question about what they said.
- 2 Name one thing that worked. Be specific: "You slowed down on the important part."
- 3 Offer one thing to try next time. Just one: "Next time, try looking up at us."

Praise the process, not the talent

Aim your words at what they did, not at fixed traits.

- Say "You practiced that, and it showed," instead of "You're so smart."
- Say "I could tell you thought about your ending," instead of "You're a natural."
- Say "You kept going after you lost your place," instead of "That was perfect."

Scripts for the moment

After a rough one

"You got up there, and that is the hard part. What is one thing you would change for next time?"

When they nailed it

"You slowed right down at the important part, and it landed. That came from practice."

When they are nervous beforehand

"You do not have to feel calm. You just have to start. Say your first line, and the rest follows."

When they compare themselves

"You are not behind, you are early. Every rep makes the next one easier."

Turn everyday moments into reps

- Let them order for themselves at a restaurant.
- Ask for a two-sentence review of the movie or book at dinner.
- Have them explain how something works, or retell their day as a story.
- Give them the floor with one question, and no interruptions.

What to avoid

- Correcting mid-sentence. It stops the flow and the confidence.
- Five fixes at once. Pick the one that matters most.
- "That was perfect." Perfect leaves nowhere to grow.
- Comparing them to a sibling or a classmate.
- Praise they can tell you do not mean. Kids read it instantly.

Keep these on the fridge

Instead of "Good job"

"You practiced that, and it showed."

Instead of "You're so smart"

"You figured that out. How did you do it?"

Instead of "Don't be nervous"

"Just say your first line."

Instead of "Be confident"

"Stand tall and look at one friendly face."

REMEMBER

Confidence is built by reps with a friendly audience, and your reactions are the reward that makes a child want to speak again. Feedback is the seasoning, not the meal.