

## Play Strategies

1. Follow the child's lead. Make sure the child is the initiator of the action. Let kids drive the schedule and abandon the agenda.
2. Eye contact: position yourself right in front of the child. Give a positive response to eye contact. Responses that are overwhelming can decrease instead of increase eye contact.
3. Slow down. Many children have a 5 to 15 second latency of response time for auditory and visual motor responses.
4. Wait. Give the child time to take a turn.
5. Say what you see. Reduce the number of questions and commands, say it how it is.
6. Keep language simple. Avoid a barrage of language by using 1 to 3 word sentences.
7. Imitate the child's actions. Then change the action to see if he will imitate you. Use nonverbal turn-taking.
8. Exaggerate body language, vocal intonation patterns and facial expressions.
9. Use sensory-motor play: bouncing, tickling, swinging.
10. Allow the child to "take a break."
11. Call the child by name.
12. Expand and extend play. Label, describe, pretend, explain, and try something "one more time." Stay with the play as long as the child is interested.
13. "Share" books rather than "read" books.

## Recommendations for Play Activities

- Go to the playground lots and lots and lots. This gives children the opportunity to build muscle strength and control, explore their environment and be in a social atmosphere.
- Blow up a couple of balloons and keep them in the air by hitting and kicking them.
- Roll balls, kick balls, catch balls.
- Chase after bubbles.
- Play a simple version of "Simon Says" by just having the child imitate your actions.
- Play a simple version of Hide 'n Seek by being easy to find.
- Let your child lug stuff around. Put objects in a box and push it around. Set and clear the table. Take objects to and from the car.
- Play with play dough.
- Teach dumping and pouring with water and sand activities.
- Allow the child to have time to be "messy" and play with glue or paint. Fingerprinting is great and you can use homemade items like pudding.
- When supervised, allow your child to cut with scissors. Hold the paper while your child cuts.
- Play any activity that encourages turn-taking.
- Play simple board games with your child.
- Engage in matching and sorting activities.
- Allow your child to play in the garden by breaking up clumps, pulling weeds, watering, digging or pulling out food that needs to be harvested.
- Play with ice cubes.
- Stand under an umbrella when it is raining.
- Watch reflections from a mirror.
- Play with each other's shadows.
- Play with pinching things: clothespins, tongs or tweezers.
- Play with magnets.
- Make and fly paper airplanes.
- Have a puppet show and allow your child to be the voice for a puppet.
- Go on a scavenger hunt by following arrows to a surprise.
- Ride through a car wash.
- Go fly a kite or run with streamers in the wind.
- Turn up the music and then sing and dance.

## Recommendations for Toys

foot-propelled ride-on toys  
balls of various sizes  
books (lots and lots of them)  
crayons and paper  
dolls  
matching activities  
simple puzzles  
sorting activities  
sit 'n spin

interlocking blocks  
pegboard  
little toy animals  
cars  
bath toys  
dress-up clothes  
playhouse  
simple board games  
age-appropriate battery operated toys

## Reading Hints

- Let your toddler *see* you reading.
- Read to your toddler even if it is only for a short moment.
- Give your toddler durable books that can be carried around and handled.
- Look at lots and lots of pictures and talk about them. Don't worry so much about the words.
- Talk about concepts from books: problem-solving, pictures and symbols represent real things, differences and similarities, up-down-left-right-top-inside-upside down- around and so much more, relationships between people, emotions
- Point to objects and name them, then have your child name them. Ask them to find objects and point them out.
- Imitate the actions and sounds that are part of the story.
- Read the stories again and again and pause at the words your child knows to encourage your child to express the word(s).