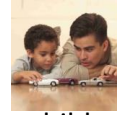




SPECIAL TIME

What is special time?

This is a particular type of play where you set aside a 'special time' for just you and one child. If you have more than one child, be aware that they will all need their own special time. This may mean that you don't do it daily for each child! Older children's special time may have a different focus; e.g., time to chat without distractions.



Why is special time important?

- * It allows your child to feel they have a particular time with you where there is space and time for what they want;
- * It can help your child to develop attention and listening skills;
- * It provides time for you to practise being led by your child in play;
- * It increases confidence in communication.



What do you need to do?

- * Set aside five minutes on a regular basis. Depending on how many children in your family need special time, and how much time you can give, decide whether you can commit to doing it daily with each child, alternate days, weekly or anything else. Having intervals further apart than weekly is probably not so useful;
- * **Reduce distractions** by turning off the TV, radio and mobile phones. Ensure any other children are sleeping, or playing with an adult or older child, so won't come and disturb you;
- * **Let your child choose the toy:** have a choice of two or three different toys on the floor. You could also look at books or sing songs;
- * **Be face-to-face with your child**, either sitting or lying on the floor;
- * **Follow what your child wants to do with the toys**, even if it's not what you're supposed to do with them! Try copying or extending what s/he does. If your child is unsure what to do with the toys or asks for help, show him or her, but keep your language simple;
- * **Repeat and add to what your child says in a simple phrase.** For example, if your child says, 'Duck', you could say, 'Yes, the duck's swimming.';
- * **Use simple language to describe what is happening.** Emphasise new words; for example, 'You're *rolling* the dough.' Use fun noises too, such as, 'Whoosh!' or, 'Pop!' Try not to give your child instructions, but concentrate on what's actually happening;
- * **Try not to ask questions**, especially when you already know the answer. Instead, turn your questions into comments. For example, rather than asking, 'What are you doing?', you could say, 'You're cooking dinner.';
- * **Give your child lots of praise.** You can do this with facial expressions and the tone of your voice, as well as with what you say.