

Play at Home

With the many distractions and demands at home, it can be hard to set up time to play with our kids! We know you are your child's best play partner, so here are some ideas to help you keep going or get started!

Here are a few tips for play time:

- 1) Find time to **Be Together!** Choose a time when both you and your child have the energy engage and have fun!
 - If you and/or your child are too tired or hungry, try another time.
 - Have patience with each other! Help your child settle into the new routine by taking little slices of time to connect.
- 2) Set up an activity that both you and your child might enjoy together.
 - Let the play activity have a pattern or rhythm to it. This lets everyone know what is coming. (See examples at the end.)
 - Try playing with things that are not typically toys or no toys at all. This lets you both focus on being silly and creative.
 - If your child likes to play alone with certain toys (like Lego, trains, cars etc.), you will have more success if you choose a different activity to do with them for now.
- 3) Keep play short and fun.
 - Laughing, smiling, and feeling loved, safe, and connected are the goals of play.
 - End the activity while things are going well! It leaves you both with memories of a positive experience together.
 - If 'play time' lasts 1 minute, call it a win!
- 4) Show what to do. Repeat. Add a little change to keep it fun!
 - Some children need to watch many times before they understand the pattern/rhythm and feel safe to join. That's okay!
 - Add variation with little changes to keep the play patterns interesting. You can add variation by:
 - i. Playing a game with similar steps but use different objects
 - ii. Change the speed of the play activity
 - iii. Try the play activity in a different place in your home
 - iv. Switch your roles in the play activity
- 5) Think about the words you use.
 - Share what you are thinking and doing with your face and hands! (gasp, hmmm, wow, oh no, yuck, ugh!). This lets them think and learn to problem solve.
 - Use actions and gestures, such as pointing, shrugging, nodding your head, etc.
 - Too many words can be overwhelming. If your child is using 1 word, respond with 1-2 words at a time.

For children learning how to play with others, they need to understand:

- What is this play activity about? (pattern or steps)
- What am I supposed to do? (roles: child role, parent role)
- No matter what happens, I am safe. I can look to my caregiver for help. My caregiver will soothe me when I'm overwhelmed.

Examples of how to help children understand this:

**Remember: add small changes to the way you repeat the play pattern!*

- 1) Tickle Game: The pattern is: one person tickles and the other runs and laughs
 - Caregiver says "I'm going to get you..." and holds tickle fingers out
 - Caregiver tickles child
 - Child laughs
 - Caregiver stops tickling
 - Repeat *
- 2) Clean Up game: The pattern is: we both put a toy in the bucket one after another
 - Caregiver steps on toy and says "ouch" and throws toy in to basket
 - Caregiver throws another toy in basket until child notices them
 - Caregiver invites child to participate by handing them a toy or dropping one near them
 - Child picks up toy (caregiver can bring the bucket closer if needed)
 - Repeat *
- 3) Laundry Game: The pattern is: adult gives item & child puts item into laundry basket
 - Caregiver pulls item from the washer and gives to child
 - Child accepts item and puts in dryer
 - Repeat *
 - *You can also try this with the emptying the dishwasher/drying rack, putting away clothes, when building a block tower, or doing a puzzle together*