



Pathways to Success

Helpful Strategies for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children

Play is Work for Kids!

Young children learn about the world through play. Playing with their friends teaches them to make sense of their environment, build relationships, develop social skills, and learn to interact with the world around them.

Adults playing with children provide important information and support for the child's growth and development. Playing with an adult can improve:

- Academic goals (learning colours, shapes, numbers, letters, etc.)
- Life skills (learning how to use different objects/toys , building skills like focus, attention, problem solving)
- Social skills (learning how to take turns, building awareness of others, practicing interactions with others, etc.)

Joining a child in play supports the development of a child's social-emotional skills. When an adult follows the child's lead in play, we help to:

- Create a strong bond with the children in our lives
- Make children feel empowered, special and confident
- Teach children that we care about their feelings and we are interested in them

“Child-led play” means the child takes the lead and directs the play. This can sometimes be difficult for adults. You need to step back and give control to the child. Between 5 and 15 minutes of this type of play each day can make a difference in the life of any child.

The rules are simple. Always let the child lead the play. For example, the child can make choices of what to play and how to play. Tell the child this is your special time together and set a timer so they know how long their special time with you is.

(see over)



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After the child has picked their toys, follow the **PRIDE** acronym (below) to help you remember the important points:

- P:** Praise - Make positive statements about the good things the child is doing. For example, “I like how you set up all the cars!”
- R:** Reflect Talk - When the child makes a statement (“There goes Thomas!”) or noise (“Vroom vroom!”), you repeat it back.
- I:** Imitate - Copy the child’s actions. For example, when the child puts their baby doll to bed, you put your baby doll to bed.
- D:** Describe - Use comments or statements (not questions) to describe what the child is doing in their play. For example, “You put the blue block on top of the red one.”
- E:** Enthusiasm - Always show excitement, have a positive attitude and end the play on a positive note, so the child will be excited to play with you next time.