

6 Tips for Play and Special Time

Parent-child play and spending special time together helps children learn and develop and is a great way to get to know their world. Here are some tips from the Parents Plus Programmes on how best to play with your children.

1

Set aside special time for play

Build a routine for play and special time. For younger children, a short, daily play for 15 to 20 minutes can make a real difference. For older children, you can plan longer, less frequent times (e.g. two one-hour sessions weekly) based around an activity or hobby.

2

Build one-on-one time

One-to-one time with each of your children is the best way to get to know them individually and to build a bond with them. This could be spent playing together or reading/chatting before bed or even doing household tasks together.

3

Choose interactive, imaginative activities

The best toys and activities allow children to be active and creative and allow parents and children to connect and talk to one another.

4

Follow your child's interests

Rather than taking over, encourage your child to lead in play - this helps to build their confidence and learning. Let your child choose the activity and follow their ideas.

5

Be a good audience

Show interest in your child's ideas and activities. Rather than asking too many questions, slow down and comment, e.g. "I see you are driving the big truck", "You picked the green pencil". Wait and notice how they respond.

6

Encourage

It's easy to fall into the trap of correcting children when you play. For play and special time, look for all that they are doing right. Use lots of positive comments.