



Guiding Play Techniques/Practices

Here are a few practices that support attachment, shared attention and play with your child. Try using the tips below to join in your child's play.

- 1. Be at your child's level.** Sit face-to-face, crouch down, or re-position yourself so you mirror your child's position and make it easier for them to share social attention with you. For example, think about playing patty cake—it works best if you are sitting to see each other's hands and facial expressions. Another example is when your child wants to show you something or tries to get your attention. Crouch or sit so you're at their level. This way, you're more accessible, and it's easier for them to share joint and social attention with you. Being at their level also gives your child a great vantage point to see you imitate them.
- 2. Join your child.** Sit on the floor, run around in circles, hold hands while they jump on the bed—whatever your child loves to do, join them. Imitate them during play to show you're having fun WITH them. Your child is in the driver's seat; you're the passenger along for the ride! You might comment on what you see or hear or suggest a different route, but they decide where to go and at what speed. The same goes for when you join your child in play. Your job is not to direct or steer but be with them for the journey. Of course, there will be times when it's appropriate to offer suggestions, variations, or guide them, but these will be strategic moments to help your child progress through their development.
- 3. Slow down and wait!** Slow down and wait! Parents often play at a much faster pace than children, so one of your biggest challenges may be to slow down. Match your child's pace—waiting is a great way to help build excitement and anticipation! Imagine blowing bubbles for your child. Hold the wand up, take a big, dramatic breath in as your eyes get bigger, and then pause. The goal is to build your child's anticipation! Another benefit to waiting is giving your child chances to initiate and respond. Waiting is a natural way to encourage your child to use their learning skills. Imagine that you have been working on your child handing you their shoes when they want to go outside. Rather than handing them their footwear and helping put them on in a hurry, stand near the shoes and door and wait to give them the chance to hand you their shoes.



A quick list of some of the benefits of slowing down

- Builds anticipation
- Keeps you as the follower of your child's play, rather than the director
- Gives you a chance to watch your child's cues and non-verbal behavior
- Gives your child a chance to initiate with you
- Gives your child a chance to respond to you

4. Respond. We always want you to respond to your child by reinforcing and encouraging their efforts. Facial expressions, positive comments and mini celebrations are quick and easy ways to respond.