



# Strategies To Support Play

## Remove distractions

An organized, distraction-free play area can go a long way in helping children stay focused and interested in play. You can help your child focus by turning off distractions such as TVs, noisy toys, and music in the background. If toys become cluttered as you're playing, you can set aside the ones that are no longer being used. Make sure to have some toy options out so your child can show you his creative ideas, but not too many that it becomes visually overwhelming.

## Follow your child's lead

First, take a step back and observe what toys your child likes to play with and what he does with them on his own. Then join in on his ideas! Because play doesn't have to have strict rules, you can be flexible with how you play with toys. Your child may want to put the potato head pieces in all "wrong" or put wooden fruit in the back of his dump truck, and that's OK! Letting your child lead will encourage your child to come up with his own ideas. He's also more likely to learn and use new words when they are about his interests.

## Set up play routines

Children like routines because they know what to expect. After your child does a few actions, you can help establish a routine by repeating the first step. For example, if your child stacks up a few blocks and then crashes the tower, you can quickly stack up two of the blocks again. If your child makes a sandwich and feeds it to your puppet, you can break the sandwich apart as the puppet eats it and then hand your child two of the pieces. These actions will cue your child that he can continue playing.

## Introduce additional ideas

Using a variety of toys and actions will give you and your child more to talk about and keep the play interesting. After doing the same routine a few times, try gradually introducing another play idea. Remember to keep your new idea related to what your child is already doing. For example, if you and your child are pushing cars around, you can set out blocks to build a garage or drive a car under a book as a tunnel. If your child isn't interested, you can return back to what he was doing before. After a few minutes, try introducing your idea again or introduce a different new idea.