



'Special Time' with your child

Special Time is a great way for you and your child to play together. It can help support your child to develop:

- Early play sounds and vocabulary
- Communication and social interaction skills
- Play skills
- Attention
- Confidence and self esteem

- ✓ Find a nice quiet time when both you and your child are relaxed and calm.
- ✓ Turn off and put away all electronic devices.
- ✓ Put other toys away and find a quiet space that is not too distracting for your child.
- ✓ Try to give your child your complete attention and only focus on what your child is doing and saying.
- ✓ Enjoy the time together, even if it is only a short time at the beginning, e.g. 2 to 3 minutes.
- ✓ Add Special Time into your daily routine so your child knows that Special Time will take place at the same time every day.
- ✓ Pick toys that you know your child likes and enjoys.
- ✓ Keep your language simple.



What you need

- A blanket, sheet or a mat.
- An indicator of when time is up, e.g. a kitchen timer with sound / buzzer.
- A basket or other container.
- Between one and eight toys / activities that your child enjoys, e.g. toys which light up or make sounds, musical instruments, cars or a mirror.



OR

In place of toys, you can have a treasure basket full of natural materials, e.g. sticks, pinecones or conkers.



How to do it

Time:

- Decide when you will do Special Time.
- Set aside 10 to 15 minutes a day.
- Find a time when any siblings can be safely kept occupied with a quiet activity or can be with another family member.

Toys:

- **Prepare** the Special Time basket (refer to the toys below for suggestions).
- Pick toys your child **enjoys**.

Location:

- Special Time can take place anywhere in your home, just make sure it is a **quiet calm** space.
- Once you have decided where to do Special Time, lay the blanket / mat / sheet out on the floor.
- This highlights the **area** you will be playing in.
- **Encourage** your child to come and sit on the blanket / mat / sheet.
- When your child has sat down, allow them to take toys from the Special Time basket.
- Let your child **play** with them for a set length of time (working up towards **5 to 10 minutes**).
- Ensure you have an indicator for when time has finished, e.g. timer with a sound.
- Let your **child choose** how they want to play.

Role of the adult:

- **Listen to and watch** carefully what your child is saying and doing.
- Make **simple comments** on what your child is doing, e.g. *'tall tower'*.
- **Imitate** your child's speech, e.g. if your child says *'car'*, you say *'car'* and perhaps add another word or sound, e.g. *'yes, car, brrmm'*.
- Try to avoid asking questions or making suggestions ~ follow your child's lead.
- Respond naturally to your child's communications by making sounds, e.g. if they push the car, you might say *'brrmm'* or if they pick up a puzzle piece, you might comment on the shape, e.g. *'circle'*.
- A couple of minutes before the timer sounds, let your child know that Special Time is nearly finished, e.g. say *'last one'* or *'nearly finished'*.
- Get ready to help your child with the end of Special Time ~ this could be by having a snack, toy or activity ready to give to your child when Special Time is finished.
- When the timer sounds to indicate Special Time is finished, stop and put the items back in the basket (encouraging your child to help you if they can / want to).
- Say clearly **'Special Time has finished'**.
- Then say or show what you are going to do next, e.g. **'Special Time finished', 'snack time'**.
- Do not go beyond the allocated time.
- This will then become an enjoyable time that your child looks forward to and stops before they lose attention.

'What if my child does not come to Special Time?'

- ✓ You could show your child a toy from the basket (try to use the same toy every time it is Special Time).
- ✓ Say 'Special Time'.
- ✓ Give your child time to respond.
- ✓ Hold your hand out to encourage them to come to you.
- ✓ Bring the Special Time basket nearer to your child.
- ✓ If your child still isn't joining you, then start to play with the toys yourself to see if they might join you.
- ✓ Try again another time with different toys if this hasn't worked.

Suggested toys and language to use

Cause and effect toys (require an action to make something happen)

Press and go toys
Pull back toys
Musical instruments



Push
Go
Crash
Wheeee
Shake
Press
Spin, spin

Kitchen tools:

Pots
Pans
Whisk
Spoons
Chopping board
Sieve
Washing up bowl
Bottle of water



Mix
Stir
Chop, chop
Whisk
Scoop

Garden materials:

- Tray
- Mud
- Leaves
- Sticks
- Twigs
- Stones
- Pots



Crunch
Squelch
Snap
Squish
Scrunch

Puzzles

- One-piece puzzles
- Inset puzzles
- Peg boards
- Posting toys
- Shape sorters



In
Push
Wheeee
Press
Post

Building blocks

- Duplo
- Lego
- Wooden blocks



Build
Wobble
Tower
1, 2, 3
All fall down
Crash

Transport toys

- Trains
- Train tracks
- Cars
- Garage set
- Small cars



Choo, choo
Zoom
Brrmmm
Ready steady go
Nee Naw

Pretend play toys

Dolls
Teddies
Tea set
Hairbrush
Toothbrush



Baby
Brush, brush
Glug, glug, glug
Mmmm
Yummy
Stir, stir
Pour

To find out more / Useful links

- <https://ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/>
- <https://www.earlyyearseducator.co.uk/communication-and-language-development>
- If your child is known to Speech and Language Therapy and Special Time has been suggested, consult the Speech and Language Therapy report or liaise with your child's Speech and Language Therapist. A link to the Speech and Language Therapy Service page on the Hounslow Local Offer is below:

<https://fsd.hounslow.gov.uk/kb5/hounslow/fsd/service.page?id=6C2o0dA-fEI>