

Child-directed Play

Assignment: Five minutes of daily one-on-one “special playtime.”

Rules:

- Let the child lead the activity – he/she chooses the activity
- Use **Pride**:
 - **P**raise appropriate behavior (use *labeled* praise – tell child exactly what it is you liked)
 - **R**eflect – repeat back what the child has said (you can elaborate on it)
 - **I**mitate – be an active participant in the play
 - **D**escribe – watch your child closely and comment on what he/she is doing
 - Be **E**nthusiastic – display excitement!
- **Avoid**
 - Commands (e.g., “hand me that crayon,” “Sit in your chair”)
 - Questions (e.g., “what are you drawing?”) – [NOTE: this is the hardest one to avoid!]
 - Criticism and sarcasm (e.g., “you are making a mess,” “That was a dumb thing to do”)
- For inappropriate behavior:
 - Use *strategic attention* –reward the appropriate behaviors you want to see more of (always use labeled praise so that child knows exactly what he/she is doing right)
 - Use *selective ignoring* – withdraw attention when child exhibits inappropriate behavior

Appropriate toys for child-directed play:

- Building blocks
- Legos
- Crayons and paper
- Other toys that involve creativity and do not have preset rules