



# It's a Breeze To Help Your Child Learn!

Try these simple but effective strategies with your young toddler

Many parents are interested in learning about ways to support their young children's learning. When used together, the strategies on this page are effective for supporting young children's involvement in day-to-day activities and helping them learn. The greater variety of these strategies you use when you interact with your child, the more you will notice positive things happening!

What you can do to **engage** your child in day-to-day activities:

- Find out about your child's favorite people, objects, and things to do.
- Give him lots of chances throughout the day to do what he likes to do.
- Allow him plenty of chances to begin and be an active part of day-to-day activities related to his interests.

What you can do to **respond** to your child in ways that will maintain her involvement in day-to-day activities:

- Pay attention to what she can do on her own.
- Let yourself be part of what your child does or says. Shift your attention to match her interests within the activity.
- Respond promptly and warmly to your child's efforts to interact with people and objects.
- Match your response to your child's excitement, attention span, and what she is trying to do or say.
- Be patient while your child tries to do or say something on her own. Give her

plenty of time to participate in activities she enjoys.

- Respond positively to your child with suggestions, comments, questions, gestures, and/or by arranging the setting and materials to help her continue her involvement in the activity.

What you can do to help your child **build** on what he understands, does, and says:

- Encourage your child to build on the ways that he is involved in day-to-day activities he enjoys. In other words, help him try something new or different, but make it related to what he's already doing to be part of the activity.
- Add new materials or arrange existing materials and space to encourage him to use his interests to try something new or different.
- Give your child chances to do just the next step for things he is learning to do (for example, when singing a familiar song, pause at the end of a verse to leave out a word and let him fill it in).
- Show him how to do something differently or try something new.
- Give him just enough help (with holding a toy, for example) so that he can try something new or different. As he gets more practice, reduce the amount of assistance you provide.
- Let your child practice what he has just learned throughout the day.

# More opportunities

Let's look in as one mother puts these strategies into practice:

**A special, yet ordinary, learning moment between a mother and child**

**Strategies this mother uses to support her child's involvement and learning during day-to-day activities**

Mother Shelby Smith and 14-month-old, Derek, are getting ready to play ball outdoors for the third time this week. Derek loves the outdoors, so Shelby tries to involve him in many different day-to-day activities that involve the outdoors.

As Shelby washes Derek's hands and face after the evening meal, Derek chatters and bounces with excitement. "Ba! Ba!" he chatters with delight. "It's ball time," Shelby announces. Derek claps his hands together with joy, continuing his anticipation, "Ba! Ba!" Shelby says, "I hear you! You want to play ball! Let's go!" Mom holds her son's hand as they toddle out into the yard. Shelby helps Derek to search for his favorite ball in the yard.

Shelby moves items in the yard so that there is more room for Derek to run after and play with the ball. Derek throws the ball and toddles toward it. Shelby chases him, exclaiming, "I'll race you to the ball!" Derek squeals in excitement as they both get closer to the ball. Shelby matches her running speed with Derek's toddling pace.

Shelby watches as Derek tries to throw the ball again. She retrieves the ball, throws it in the air, and then rolls it to Derek. He smiles with glee, and then tries to copy his mother. Next, Shelby shows him how to throw the ball down on the ground so it bounces. Derek tries to copy her, but the ball does not bounce. Shelby places her hands over Derek's on the ball a couple of times to help him throw the ball down forcefully

● ● Shelby has noticed that by intentionally offering day-to-day activities related to Derek's interests, Derek shows more involvement in the activities.

● ● Shelby pays attention and is aware of Derek's efforts to interact with her. She interprets Derek's chatter as a request to play ball. She responds promptly and warmly, by acknowledging Derek's desire, and helping him find a ball outside. Shelby considers what Derek can do on his own by holding his hand to walk outside, and letting him help search for the ball.

● ● Shelby lets herself be a part of playing ball with Derek, making sure her involvement matches his interests within the activity. She matches the intensity of Derek's excitement about what is going on. By moving items in the yard, she helps Derek maintain his involvement in the activity.

