

## Q&A HOW TO CREATE A CONDUCTIVE SETTING FOR ENJOYABLE AND MEANINGFUL PLAY.



### Q How do I help my toddler who is reluctant to join in play activities with others?

Playing with peers promotes skills such as socialising, sharing, taking turns and resolving conflicts. However, many children are naturally hesitant in unfamiliar situations or around new people. Here are some strategies to help your toddler adapt:

- **Actively practise with your child.** Take turns adding blocks to a tower and cue your child by saying "my turn" and "your turn". Use toys like teddy bears, action figures or dolls to ask for turns. Give specific praise such as "nice sharing".
- **Discover the difference.** Some toddlers need more time and patience from adults to feel safe in unfamiliar situations. Look for behavioural patterns. Are some places more difficult to adjust to than others? Does your toddler have a tougher time with activities with more stimulation from sounds and lights? Exercise greater sensitivity to help your child in these environments.
- **Acknowledge emotions.** Young children often do not have the words to express how they feel, and may act aggressively or have a tantrum. Acknowledge, validate and name your toddler's feelings.
- **Plan playdates.** Start by inviting one or two friends home and keep the session short, under an hour. Gradually introduce playdates with new friends and in new environments, such as a park.

### Q What are some considerations for setting up learning centres to encourage children to explore and discover?

Setting up learning centres in the classroom is a good way to pique children's curiosity. Learning centres enable children to make sense of the world around them through different types of play, including role-play and dramatisation. These opportunities help nurture a sense of wonder, engagement, appreciation and creativity.

1. **Provide meaningful pretend play.** Settings that relate to real life in the dramatic corner, such as a supermarket or clinic, let children act out roles. Support their play with questions like "What ingredients can we buy to replace the missing items in our shopping list?". Such play develops their problem-solving and social skills. Include non-fiction books related to the theme of the learning centre.
2. **Plan challenging tasks.** Extend children's learning by getting them to come up with questions and find out the answers. At the science corner, supply items such as magnifying glasses, measuring tapes and recording sheets to promote observation, prediction and experimentation.
3. **Provide ample space and props.** Make sure there is space for group play. Loose parts, manipulatives and photos of possible play ideas prompt children on what they can do and can evoke new ideas.
4. **Encourage peer interaction.** Plan open-ended tasks for pair or group play. For example, invite children to brainstorm how to build a tower that can support a small toy on top. Provide activity cards with similar problem-solving activities. Through discussions, they will learn to build on each other's ideas and think of ways to complete a task.

Observe children's responses to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning centre in achieving its objectives and desired outcomes. The information can be used to modify the resources and materials in the learning centre, and plan for extension activities to build on children's learning.



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