

How To ENGAGE YOUR CHILD AT HOME

Everything you need to know about effective engagement

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WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement is the amount of time children spent interacting with their environment (adults, peers, and materials) in a developmentally and contextually appropriate manner (McWilliam & Bailey, 1992).

Increasing children's level of engagement helps them to stay focused on the task and lower their aggression level. When children are actively engaged with their environment, they will interact with others more, manipulate with materials more, and therefore learn more.



When you say:

"My child is **participating** in class."

What it really means:

It refers to generally taking part in the activity (Thomas, 2007)

When you say:

"My child is **engaged** in class."

What it really means:

It refers to the time the child spent interacting with adults, friends and materials (McWilliam & Bailey, 1992)

WHAT ARE ROUTINES?



Routines are activities that happen on a fairly frequent basis. For e.g., daily home routines include waking up, shower time, meal times, going to bed, dressing up, journey to and fro school, etc. (McWilliam & Casey, 2008). Weekly activities, such as going to religious venues, visiting grandparents, library visits, etc., can also be part of the child's routines.

Routines are important as they provide a predictable platform for the child to develop and learn functional skills which are related to the routines, for e.g., knowing how to button clothes during dressing up, eating meals with utensils, unwritten social rules when visiting religious venues or library, social skills to interact with friends and relatives during visits, etc.

ENGAGING YOUR CHILD IS AS EASY AS



OBSERVE

- Stay close to your child, be patient and wait for at least 5 seconds.
- Look and listen to what your child is doing or saying.



FOLLOW

- Join in and play with your child.
- Copy your child's play actions, facial expressions and sounds or words. This is to encourage your child to interact with you and to get the interaction going.



EXPAND

- Say out loud what you think your child is trying to tell you with his/her actions, sounds or words.
- You can also copy what your child says or does and add a few words or play actions to make their message or play more complete.

ENGAGING YOUR CHILD DURING DAILY ROUTINES



MEAL TIME

Observe: Ethan holds the spoon and stirs the cereal in the bowl instead of scooping it.

Follow: Take your spoon and stir the cereal from Ethan's bowl too.

Expand: As you are stirring the cereal with the spoon, scoop the cereal up and say "scoop". Encourage Ethan to scoop the cereal with his spoon too!

PLAY TIME

Observe: Amy puts toy fruits into the teapot and shakes the teapot repeatedly.

Follow: Join in by putting toy fruits into another teapot and shake the teapot too.

Expand: As you are shaking the teapot, say, "Mama shakes the juice." Expand the play by acting out pouring the liquid from the teapot into a cup and say, "Mama pours orange juice into the cup for you!" Encourage your child to pour his/her into another cup and expand further by encouraging him/her to feed the doll with the orange juice too.



READING TIME

Observe: John takes a book, flips the pages and points at every picture in each page and goes "Wah, bird, cat, sun."

Follow: Sit beside John and point at the pictures as well when John flips the pages.

Expand: When John goes "Wah, bird, cat, sun", expand his words by saying "Wow, that's a big cat", "Oh, it's a yellow sun", "There are so many birds! How many are there? Let's count..1..2..3!"



SETTING THE PITCH RIGHT!

CONSISTENCY — Use the same way to engage or respond to your child when developing his/her skills, for e.g., if the goal is to encourage your child to use words to request for an item, you should only give him/her the item when he/she use words, and not when he/she cries for it.

LABELLED PRAISES — Praise your child specifically for what he/she has done well, for e.g., by saying, "Good job in scooping your food with the spoon," or "I like how you use your words to ask for the car."

EMBEDDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES — Learning takes place anywhere, anytime. Provide your child with short sessions of about five to 10 minutes and ample opportunities to practise the targeted skills in their routines.

FUN — Let the learning be fun and enjoyable for your child.



LET'S TRY THESE AT HOME!

DELAY

You can **deliberately hold back** the items which your child wants.

WHY?

To encourage your child to request using his/her words or gestures like pointing or tapping.

OUT OF REACH

You can put a your child's favourite toy in an **out-of-reach but visible location** (for e.g., on top of the shelf).

WHY?

To encourage your child to request using his/her words or gestures like pointing or tapping.

You can **show** your child how to brush teeth in the correct sequence by brushing your teeth, and ask him/her to copy the actions - **Physical Modelling**

You can **SAY** to your child, "John, say 'Give me the red car'" and encourage him to imitate the words before giving the red car to him - **Verbal Modelling**

SABOTAGE

You can deliberately put a sock into your child's hand instead of his/her foot and observe your child's reactions.

WHY?

To encourage your child to comment on the situation by asking him/her, "Oh, what is that on your hand?"

PHYSICAL AND VERBAL MODELLING

Show or say the targeted action or words.

WHY?

To encourage your child to follow the actions or imitate the words.

REFERENCES

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