

Encourage your child to protect her rights and express her needs with words. With your help, your child can learn to use words rather than physical acts to satisfy her needs and rights.



Why this is important

Your child needs to learn to protect her rights and feelings with words rather than actions. Although she may occasionally use physical aggression because of her limited vocabulary, she eventually will stand up for herself instead of hitting. Your child can learn to express herself in appropriately assertive ways by simply and clearly saying what she needs or wants.

What you do

- Help your child practice using words instead of actions to express her needs. For example:

A personal choice	<i>I want a ...(banana).</i>
An ordinary need	<i>I need my...(potty).</i>
An alternative to physical aggression	<i>That's my...(doll).</i>
A self-protective statement	<i>I don't like...(to be hit).</i>
- Observe your child carefully so that you can recognize the need for these expressive statements and specifically encourage her to use them: *Thank you for telling me that was your car. I'm sorry she took it away from you. Or, You used words to tell her you don't like to be hit. Now she knows how you feel.*

Another idea

Help your child anticipate the need for using clear statements by role-playing different situations with her. You can create scenarios involving various emotions or physical needs.

Place a full-length mirror where your child can use it.

You can help your child understand what his body looks like and feel good about his reflection in the mirror.



Why this is important

A full-length mirror helps your child know what his body looks like as a whole. He can begin to take more responsibility for grooming himself by using the mirror when combing his hair or getting dressed. He may enjoy simply staring at his reflection and smiling at the image. Studying the mirror reinforces his self-image as he learns to notice the color of his eyes and what his face looks like. A positive self-image builds confidence as he grows.

What you do

- Provide a full-length mirror for your child to use daily.
- Help him get dressed and encourage his efforts: *You put your shirt on by yourself. You look great! Do you want to look at yourself in the mirror?*
- Suggest dressing in front of the mirror on occasion so that he can see how his shirt looks as he buttons it or how his pants look as he pulls them on.
- Invite him to comb his hair in front of the mirror. Show him that you think he is capable by not fixing his hair after he combs it.
- Offer him privacy as he becomes comfortable dressing and grooming in front of the mirror.

Another idea

Your child might occasionally enjoy sharing the mirror with another child. The children can see their full images side by side and notice the similarities and differences.

Packing My Own Picnic

Game 133

Invite your child to pack a special picnic lunch and decide what to include.

Packing a picnic allows your child to act independently and learn from his choices.



Why this is important

Your child probably likes to complete tasks on his own. In this activity he can work independently and his mistakes will have minimal consequences. An important thing for him to learn about independence is that sometimes things do not go as planned. This activity is a gentle introduction to the risks of problems with later responsibilities, such as getting school supplies together in a backpack.

What you do

- Invite your child to join you on a picnic. Suggest that he first pack a lunch to take with him.
- Go with him to the kitchen and point out available items for packing.
- Talk about where he will be eating, such as in the backyard or in the family room, and what foods might be convenient to eat there.
- Lay out the food items as you talk, along with several sandwich bags for him to use. Help him remember where to find his lunchbox or a paper bag.
- Stay in the kitchen while he works, but help only if asked: *I'll be here in the kitchen for a few minutes. Let me know if you need some help.*
- Remember that this is an exercise in independence but you can encourage healthy eating by limiting his food choices to healthy items only.

Another idea

When you repeat this game, it might help your child if you remind him of the outcome of the previous picnic: *Last time the pudding leaked out, remember?*

Wear the Turn Hat

Game 134

Invite your child and one or two siblings to play a follow-the-leader game in which each person takes a turn wearing the hat and leading.

Using a hat to represent the current leader in the game can help your child learn to take turns.



Why this is important

Using a physical symbol, such as a hat, may help your child understand the idea of taking turns in a game. Your child may enjoy the importance of wearing the hat as he learns about cooperation. Using friendly language such as *passing the turn hat* instead of *giving up your turn* helps your child understand that his turn will come again soon.

What you do

- Find a special hat for the game.
- Invite your child and other siblings to play: *Let's play "Follow the Leader." This hat will tell us whose turn it is to be the leader.*
- Choose one to be the leader: *Jon, will you be the leader? You can put on the hat so we'll all know it's your turn.*
- Encourage the leader to perform an action, such as touching his nose. The other children will then copy his movements. Give each child a few minutes at a time with the hat.

Another idea

You can play this game one-on-one with your child at home to help him share leadership. In a group, you can use the hat to mark each child's turn to pass out spoons, pull the wagon, or lead a song.

Throughout your day, ask your child *who*, *what*, and *where* questions that will encourage him to describe people, objects, and places.

You encourage conversation with your child by posing questions that your child can answer.



Why this is important

Answering basic questions gives your child the chance to use many of the words he knows and encourages him to learn new words. By following your child's answer with more conversation about the topic, you help him describe people, objects, and places. Questions beginning with *who*, *what*, and *where* will guide him throughout his life in telling and interpreting stories.

What you do

- Include simple questions in your daily conversations with your child using the words *who*, *what* and *where*: *Who will we be calling? What sound do you hear? Where's a good place to hide?*
- Use your child's answers as a starting point for further back-and-forth conversation on the same topic.
- Keep your questions short and casual. Your child may be reluctant to participate if you appear too insistent with your questions.

Another idea

Use questions to encourage your child's creative thinking. Create an imaginary scenario and encourage your child to respond to your questions about it: *If we were going to have a big party for all of the animals at the zoo, who would you invite? What would we do at the party?*

That Doesn't Belong

Game 137

When setting the table, add an item that should not be there, such as a toothbrush, and wait for your child to discover it.

Your child will develop a clearer understanding of a group by noticing an object that does not belong in the group.



Why this is important

Pointing out an object that does not belong helps your child express the reasons why something belongs or does not belong. Noticing the item that is not part of the group helps her clarify her understanding of group membership.

What you do

- Finish setting the table by placing an odd object, such as a toothbrush or a book, near a plate.
- Say to your child, *Something doesn't look right. Would you please come and help me see what doesn't belong?*
- Show her the setting: *I was setting the table with things we use to eat. But something is there that shouldn't be. Can you see what it is?*
- Draw her attention to it, if necessary, by commenting on the appropriate items on the table: *I know we need a spoon, a cup, and a napkin.*
- Give positive feedback when she correctly locates the object: *You're right! That toothbrush shouldn't be there.*

Another idea

Increase the number of odd objects to be found. Think of other ways to incorporate the game into your time together: a pencil stuck into a crayon box, a sock in the washcloth drawer, etc.

Ball in the Bucket

Game 138

With your child, practice throwing a ball into a bucket. Increase the throwing distance as his skills improve.

Gradually, your child will gain more control in throwing.



Why this is important

By this age, children are well aware that throwing is usually done with a purpose, as in basketball or other sports. Throwing a ball at a large target helps your child learn to control and direct his own body movements. He must control his body in order to perform this or other specific actions.

What you do

- Provide a container such as a box, basket, tub, or bucket, a ball for your child, and a ball for yourself.
- Invite your child to stand with you a few feet away from the bucket.
- Throw your ball into the bucket as your child does the same: *Watch me throw the ball. Can you do it, too?*
- Move the bucket closer to him if he misses, and encourage him to try again.
- Describe his accuracy when appropriate: *You're getting it right where you want it!*
- Change the game by adding water to the bucket.

Another idea

You can increase the difficulty by moving the bucket farther away or finding a container with a smaller opening.

Changing Partner Roles

Game 140

Partner with your child in an activity that allows her to move gradually from less to more responsibility.

Experimenting with partner roles helps your child learn to lead as well as follow.



Why this is important

Your child is old enough to experience responsibility in various helper, partner, and leadership roles. Different situations require different balances of cooperation and leadership. Children need experience in these three roles to be successful in group situations.

What you do

- Use the simple task of setting the table to guide your child through various roles.
- Invite your child to help you set the table. In this helper role she helps you as you lead the task:
Can you please place the forks and plates on the table?
- Move to equal partnership for this task when she feels comfortable with helping you set the table. Together, decide who will put what on the table: *I'll be responsible for the serving dishes. What do you plan to put on the table?*
- Watch for signs that your child is ready to take full responsibility for setting the table. Assign her the leadership role so that she knows she will place most of the items on the table and give you directions on where to place the rest.

Another idea

You can plan other activities that will allow your child to move through these three roles. For example, you could make paper mosaics. At first you direct the cutting and placement of the paper pieces. With the next mosaic, you could both share the responsibility. Finally, she could make all decisions about a third mosaic and give you directions.