

Special Time



‘Special time’ is a time for you and your child to play together in addition to the times you already have – not instead of. It is a time for you to help your child develop their speech and language skills through play.

How to have a ‘special time’:

Before you start:

- Explain to your child about having this time together and that it is their job to choose what to do e.g. “This is your ‘special time’ ... for the next 5 minutes, what shall we play?”
- Allow your child to select the activity, toy or game e.g. cars, dolls, puzzles. Note, this should not be reading a book, watching TV or playing a lively outdoor game as these types of activity can be difficult to practice language strategies.

During special time:

- ‘Special time’ lasts for 5 minutes only and should not be extended.
- When your child has chosen what to do, go to a room or space where you will not be disturbed.
- Remove any obvious distractions such as radio or TV.
- The adult should follow the child’s lead, commenting on what they are doing with short simple sentences and adding ideas to their play where appropriate.
- Play with your child for five minutes, giving him your undivided attention.

When you have finished:

- At the end of the special time make it clear to the child that ‘special time is finished’.
- Your child can carry on playing if they wish, however this is no longer ‘special time’.
- If you have other children, it is important to give them their own regular ‘special times’ as well.

How often do I do ‘special time’?

- Try to do at least four ‘special times’ a week. Don’t do more than 6 in a week. Don’t try doing more than one a day.
- It is important to keep to only 5 minutes because it makes it easier for you to have the ‘special time’ more often. If you spend a long time on it, you are more likely to miss a day when you are busy.