

Encouraging Child Learning in Everyday Activities

Intentionally including, or “embedding,” learning opportunities in everyday activities at home or in your community is one way you can help your child learn new things. Embedding learning opportunities in everyday activities involves identifying what you want your child to learn, selecting the everyday activities that provide opportunities to learn things, and using brief “teaching” sessions with your child to help him or her become a more capable participant in his or her daily life.

[Watch a video of this guide](#)

Planning and Using Embedded Learning Opportunities

- Start by watching your child while he is involved in activities at home or in your community. Notice the things he already does when involved in the activities and think about what new behavior would be useful for doing things without help in the activities. Choose things your child could learn that would help him participate better in everyday activities.
- Think about the activities and routines you and your child do at home (e.g., play activities, looking at books, mealtime, etc.) and in your community (e.g., running errands, going on a walk, etc.). Identify the activities that naturally would provide opportunities for your child to learn new behavior. Plan to embed learning opportunities in the activities that could be of interest to your child.
- Give your child plenty of opportunities to be involved in the activities you selected. Arrange toys, materials, and other things in the activities in ways that would encourage her to do the new behavior. For example, putting a favorite toy within your child’s sight but slightly out of reach would encourage her to do something to request the toy.
- Pay attention to your child while participating in the activities. Help your child stay involved in the activity by joining what he is doing and by taking turns with him. When your child shows interest in an object or action, help him know to use the new behavior. Use a cue like pointing to what you want your child to do and asking him to use the behavior (e.g., pointing to a picture in a book and naming the object in the picture).
- Help your child be successful doing the new behavior. Show her how to do the behavior or physically help her do it. Draw your child’s attention to what you want her to do by pointing to or tapping an appropriate object. Wait long enough so that your child has enough time to try doing the new behavior. Give her only as much help as needed. As your child learns the behavior, provide less and less help.
- When your child tries doing the new behavior, respond positively to his attempts. Praise your child, let your child have the toy or material that is interesting to him, or provide for continued participation in the activity. Give your child lots of opportunities in different activities throughout the day to use the new behavior.



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A Quick Peek

Nadya had watched her son, Martin, in different activities and had noticed that he would look at something he wanted. Nadya knew that this behavior meant that Martin wanted the object, but others often didn’t know. Nadya thought Martin would have an easier time interacting in activities if he could point to an object to indicate that he wanted it. She identified activities Martin liked and in which he could have chances to point as a way to request something he wanted. During one of his favorite activities—finger painting—Nadya placed extra colors of paint on a paper in front of him.

When Nadya noticed Martin looking at the extra colors, she smiled and asked, “What do you want, Martin?” Martin looked at his mother, and she pointed to the paint and asked, “More paint?” She held Martin’s hand, helped him point to the paint, and said “More paint.” Then she put more paint on his paper. Over time, Nadya gradually needed only to show him what to do, and then just tell him what to do. Soon, Martin not only pointed without help to request paint during finger painting, he used pointing during many other activities, as well.

You’ll know the practice is working when...

- Your child stays involved for longer periods of time in activities at home and in the community
- Your child does new things while involved in home and community activities
- Your child is more able to do things without help while participating in activities at home and in the community

This practice guide is based upon the following *DEC Recommended Practices*: Instruction 1, 2, 4, 5, 6
 The DEC Recommended Practices are available at <http://dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>

Access this practice guide and other products at <http://ectacenter.org/decrp>
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