

Slide Handouts: Interaction – Gathering the Information



Recommended Practices Modules

Module 1

Module 1: Lesson 2

Gathering Information: Observing and Identifying Children's Interests, Abilities and Emotions

The image shows four silhouettes of children at different stages of development: a crawling baby, a sitting baby, a toddler standing and holding a ball, and a young child walking. The silhouettes are arranged from left to right, showing a progression of growth.

Welcome to Module 1: Lesson 2. Gathering Information: Observing and Identifying Children's Interests, Abilities, and Emotions

Performance Indicators

Participants will be able to observe and identify a child's:

- nonverbal and verbal cues
- interests
- abilities
- emotions

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In this lesson, participants will be able to observe and identify a child's nonverbal and verbal cues, interests, abilities and emotions.

Learning and Practice Objectives

- Identify nonverbal and verbal cues, behaviors, and interests of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers
- Learn how observing children's behavior is critical in helping you interpret and provide responsive interaction
- Practice using observation of a child's behavior to identify and interpret the child's interests, abilities, and emotions

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In this lesson we will identify nonverbal and verbal cues, behaviors and interests of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. You will learn how observing children's behavior is critical in helping you interpret and provide responsive interaction with children. You will also practice using observation of a child's behavior to identify and interpret the child's interests, abilities, and emotions by watching and thinking about several video illustrations.

DEC Recommended Practices

INT1-
INT5

INT1. Practitioners promote the child's social-emotional development by observing, interpreting, and responding contingently to the range of the child's emotional expressions.

INT2. Practitioners promote the child's social development by encouraging the child to initiate or sustain positive interactions with other children and adults during routines and activities through modeling, teaching, feedback, or other types of guided support.

INT3. Practitioners promote the child's communication development by observing, interpreting, responding contingently, and providing natural consequences for the child's verbal and non-verbal communication and by using language to label and expand on the child's requests, needs, preferences, or interests.

INT4. Practitioners promote the child's cognitive development by observing, interpreting, and responding intentionally to the child's exploration, play, and social activity by joining in and expanding on the child's focus, actions, and intent.

INT5. Practitioners promote the child's problem-solving behavior by observing, interpreting, and scaffolding in response to the child's growing level of autonomy and self-regulation.

[Practices](#)[Continue](#)

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DEC recommends the following practices to support interaction. Take as much time as you need to review them. You may download a copy by clicking the "Practices" button. Continue when you are ready to move on.

Ask the Expert

How can we ensure we engage children in high-quality interactions?



“In order to provide high-quality responsive interactions that lead to positive child outcomes, caregivers and teachers must take time to *pause and observe and interpret children’s perspectives.*”
(McCollum, 2015)

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To begin let's ask, how can we ensure we engage children in high-quality interactions? The first step is to observe children. Through observations, we can learn about a child's interests and abilities.

Identifying Cues and Interests



Key Considerations, Look Fors, and Video Examples

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Now, let's take a look at some of the ways a child may show interest in a person, object, or activity. Such signs can vary based on the age of the child. On the following slides we note key considerations, look-fors, and video examples. In this section, you'll be doing some reading, then viewing examples. After that you'll have the opportunity to pull it all together in an activity and take a quick assessment of what you've learned.

Key Considerations

Identifying Interactions: Infants and Toddlers



- With infants, it can be more difficult to read the cues.
- Look for verbal *and* non-verbal cues.
- Non-verbal cues such as looking intently at something, smiling, and gesturing can be among a child's attempts to "say something" to you.
- Try a game. For example, a game of peek-a-boo may help a child learn that when he covers and uncovers his eyes, the adult is going to react with a high-pitched "Peek-a-boo!" and laughter.

Continue

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Key Considerations: Identifying Interactions. Infants and Toddlers. Review the following text, then click continue to move forward.

Key Considerations

Identifying Interactions: Infants and Toddlers



Look Fors:

- Eye contact
- Smiling
- Pointing to objects
- Babbling
- Moving towards an object or person

Continue

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Key Considerations: Identifying Interactions. Infants and Toddlers. Review the following text, then click continue to move forward.

Activity: Wait and Watch



Video observation and reflection

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In this video, you will see a child and mother engaged in floor time play. See if you can identify the behavior(s) the child uses to interact with her mother. Also note the child's abilities that can be observed during the interaction. Make sure you have something to write with to make some notes.



Wait and Watch: Infants and Toddlers - Video 1

Continue

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In this video, you will see a child and mother engaged in floor time play. See if you can identify the behavior(s) the child uses to interact with her mother. Also note the child's abilities that can be observed during the interaction. Make sure you have something to write with to make some notes.

What Did You See? - Video 1

What behavior(s) did the child use to interact with her mother?

- Eye gaze at the desired object
- Reaching for the desired object

What child abilities did you observe in this activity of interaction?

- Sitting without assistance
- Reaching
- Using the gesture of reaching to communicate what she wanted

Continue

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The child reached for the desired object and gazed at the object with her eyes to interact with her mother. We were able to see the child sit without assistance, reach for objects, and use the gesture of reaching to communicate what she wanted.



In this video clip you will see a child sitting in his mother's lap. See if you can identify the behavior he is using to interact with her. How does the child respond when his mother engages in the activity? Also note the child's abilities that can be observed during the interaction. Again, make some notes about what you observe before moving to the next slide.



Wait and Watch: Infants and Toddlers - Video 2

Continue

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In this video clip you will see a child sitting in his mother's lap. See if you can identify the behavior he is using to interact with her. How does the child respond when his mother engages in the activity? Also note the child's abilities that can be observed during the interaction. Again, make some notes about what you observe before moving to the next slide.

What Did You See? - Video 2

What behavior(s) did the child use to interact with his mother?

- Moved leg off of mother's lap
- Pulled leg off of mother's lap using his arm and hand

What were the child outcomes when the mother responded to her child's interactions?

- The child moved, laughed, and used the behavior of moving his leg several times to continue the game

Continue

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The child interacted with his mother by moving his leg off of her lap and by pulling his leg off of her lap using his arm and hand. When the mother responded to him, the child moved, laughed, and moved his own leg to continue the game.

What Did You See? - Video 2

What child abilities did you observe in this activity of interaction?

- Sitting with assistance
- Hand/eye coordination
- Vocalization
- Attention span supporting his initiation and participation in the interaction
- Some gross motor control to move his leg

Continue

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The child showed the following abilities: sitting with help, hand/eye coordination, vocalization, attention span, and gross motor control to move his leg.

Key Considerations

Identifying Interactions: Preschoolers

- Even if a child still needs to learn appropriate ways to get what they want, adults can notice the focus of a child's attention.
- Some children may communicate an interest through their writing.
- Children with more advanced interaction skills may have more language to show you that they are trying to interact. They may also use some of the strategies infants use.
- Some children may use language. Others may silently approach when hoping to interact. Or, they may just quietly notice a person or toy that piques their interest.
- Some children may immediately go after a toy or person with whom they want to interact, while others may hold back.

Continue

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Key Considerations: Identifying Interactions: Preschoolers.

Review the following text, then click continue to move forward.

Key Considerations

Identifying Interactions: Preschoolers



Look Fors:

- Making eye contact
- Using gestures or sign language
- Smiling
- Talking
- Writing
- Asking questions

Backpack
Connectio

Continue

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Review the following text, then click continue to move forward. More information is available from the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI). They have created a resource for teachers and parents to use nonsupporting a child's social emotional development titled Backpack Connection. You can download it via the link shown on the screen or at the end of this lesson.



Alexa puts her hand close to the water. The teacher pushes the water toward her and says “Let’s let Alexa try.” The teacher is noticing Alexa’s attempt to interact with the water.

Wait and Watch: Preschoolers - Video 3

Continue

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In this video, a child is sitting on the porch with her grandmother. Her interest is in “reading” the paper just like her grandmother. What are the cues or behaviors the child uses to demonstrate interest in “reading” the paper?

Key Considerations

Identifying Interactions: Child with a Significant Disability

- Give your full attention to the child.
- Families are often aware of these subtle signs and can provide this information when asked questions such as “What does your child do to let you know he wants a particular toy? How do you know he likes or doesn’t like bath time, sitting up, music, bright lights, etc.?”

- Identifying the interactions of a child with a significant disability may involve additional time and observation.
- The child interaction may be something as subtle as an eye gaze to a specific object on the shelf, a slight move of a finger, or a vocalization. Be patient, and allow the child time to respond to the environment (Remember the environment includes things such as: people, objects, toys, actions, sounds, smells, sights, etc.).

Continue

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Key Considerations: Identifying Interactions: Child with a Significant Disability. Review the following text, then click continue to move forward.



In this video clip you will see a child sitting in his mother's lap playing with a toy. Pay attention to the behaviors he uses to interact with his mother during this activity. Also note the child's abilities that can be observed during this interaction. Make some notes about what you see the child doing to interact and what abilities you observe before moving on.

Wait and Watch: Child, Mother, and Toy - Video 4

Continue

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In this video you will see a child sitting on his mother's lap playing with a toy. Pay attention to the behaviors he uses to interact with his mother during this activity. Click the play button on the video to watch. When you are done, click continue to move forward.

What Did You See? - Video 4

What behavior(s) did the child use to interact with the toy and his mother?

- Used gestures to communicate which animal's sound he wanted to hear
- Gazed at the desired animal (subtle)
- Vocalized
- Pointed
- Imitated a sign
- Turned to his mother

Continue

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The child interacted with the toy and with his mother by using gestures to communicate which animal sound he wanted to hear, by gazing at the animals (this was quite subtle), vocalizing, pointing, imitating signs, and pointing to his mother.

Slide 28 - Slide 28

What Did You See? - Video 4

What child abilities did you observe in this interaction?

- Sitting without assistance
- Using gestures to communicate
- Attention span supports the interaction
- Vocalizations
- Imitations of sounds and signs

Continue

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The child was able to sit with help, gesture to communicate, vocalize, imitate sounds and signs, and sustain enough attention to support the interaction.

Observing a Child's Interest and Abilities



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Next, let's talk about using observation to identify a child's interests.

Observation to Identify a Child's Interests and Abilities



- Likes/dislikes
- Strengths
- Level of participation in a social activity
- Our role in providing supports
- How children interact

The more a child engages in these experiences, the more he/she learns.

Classroom
Tool

Continue

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By observing a child in everyday activities and routines, we discover their likes and dislikes, their strengths, their level of participation in a social activity, and their needs. We also learn what our role should be in providing support. By observing, we can understand how children interact with one another, with other adults, and with their environment. It is important to recognize how a child interacts, and his or her abilities, so that you can adequately support them in developing the skills needed to interact appropriately. The more a child engages in these experiences, the more he or she learns. For more information on identifying child interests related to early language and literacy, see The Center for Early Literacy Learning's classroom tool.

Key Considerations

Using Observation to Identify Child Interest



Using child interests is an effective way to encourage a child to engage in social interactions and play.

- Pay attention and watch the child.
- Interpret the child's behavior and responses as an intent to interact or communicate with you.
- A child's interactions can help identify interests.

Continue

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Using child interests is an effective way to encourage a child to engage in social interactions and play. Ways to use observation to identify a child's interests include paying attention and watch the child, interpret the child's behavior and responses as an intent to interact or communicate with you. A child's interactions can help identify interests.

Questions to Identify a Child's Interests

- What makes the child smile and laugh?
- What does the child point to, reach for, gesture toward?
- What does the child like to do over and over again?
- What holds the child's attention?
- Is there a specific characteristic of this activity that interests the child? (e.g., flashing lights on a toy, the movements to the song, the sound of parent's voice during story book reading)



Classroom
Tool

Continue

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Here are some questions to help identify a child's interests: What makes the child smile and laugh? What does the child point to, reach for, or gesture toward? What does the child like to do over and over again? What holds the child's attention? Is there a specific characteristic of this activity that interests the child? For example, flashing lights on a toy, the movements to the song, or the sound of a parent's voice during story book reading. Check out the Center for Early Literacy Learning's classroom tool for more information on identifying child interests related to early language and literacy.

Observing Child's Interests



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Let's watch some video clips of children showing interests and caregivers responding. After each clip make notes in the text box of examples of how these children expressed their interests.



In this video clip you will see a child playing with a toy. In what does he show interest? Make some notes about what you see the child doing to interact and what abilities you observe before moving on.

Let's See It: Squeaky Toy - Video 5

Continue

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In this video clip you will see a child playing with a toy. In what does he show interest? Make some notes about what you see the child doing to interact and what abilities you observe before moving on.

What Did You See? - Video 5

This little boy is showing a lot of interest in the squeak toy and finding different ways to play with it. He shows he is enjoying the noise it makes in several ways!



Continue

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This little boy is showing a lot of interest in the squeak toy and finding different ways to play with it. He shows he is enjoying the noise it makes in several ways!



In this video clip you will see a child playing in a creek. Note the child's behaviors that can be observed during this interaction. Make some notes about what you see the child doing to interact and what abilities you observe before moving on.

Let's See it: Water Play - Video 6

Continue

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In this video clip you will see a child playing in a creek. Note the child's behaviors that can be observed during this interaction. Make some notes about what you see the child doing to interact and what abilities you observe before moving on. Play the video when you are ready and click continue when you are finished.

What Did You See? - Video 6

Many children love water play. This creek is keeping this child interested. By splashing and digging, he is showing his interest.



Continue

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Many children love water play. This creek is keeping this child interested. By splashing and digging, he is showing his interest.



In this video clip you will see a child engaging in water play. Pay attention to the behaviors to show what holds his interest. Take notes on the things you observe before moving on.

Let's See it: Water and Dirt Table- Video 7

Continue

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In this video clip you will see a child engaging in water play. Pay attention to the behaviors to show what holds his interest. Take notes on the things you observe before moving on.

What Did You See? - Video 7

This child is staying very engaged in this water play, it is holding his attention and he is showing which toys he prefers.



Continue

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This child is staying very engaged in this water play, it is holding his attention and he is showing which toys he prefers.



In this video clip you will see a child playing in a pool of balls. Take notes about the child's behaviors that show his interests.

Let's See it: Ball Pool- Video 8

Continue

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In this video clip you will see a child playing in a pool of balls. Take notes about the child's behaviors that show his interests.

What Did You See? - Video 8

This child loves playing with balls and finding his favorite colors. He is picking up ball after ball.



Continue

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This child loves playing with balls and finding his favorite colors. He is picking up ball after ball.

Social Play Activities

You may observe a child's verbal or nonverbal cues or interests during social play activities.

Social Play activities are:

- Play activities in which a child is able to interact with an adult or child in a meaningful way.
- Joint-attention activities in which a child is able to play with a toy or object and interact with an adult, i.e., shared story book reading
- My-turn-Your-turn activities such as rolling a ball back and forth or blowing bubbles
- Social games such as singing songs and finger plays together, peek-a-boo, pretend play, etc.

Nursery Rhymes

Shared Reading

Play with Peers

Continue

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Here on the screen, you will find download links to practice guides you can use to assist you with observation. Review the notes on social play activities listed here, then press continue.

Where should we observe children?



Everyday activities and routines

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Where should we observe children?

It is easiest to observe children and look for their interests and strengths during their everyday activities and routines.

Everyday Activities



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What are everyday activities? Just as they say, activities that happen or could happen every day. These activities can be formal, led by a teacher/parent, or informal by following the child's lead.

Why are everyday activities important?

Allows children opportunities to:

- practice existing and new skills
- interact with adults and children



Provides adults opportunities to:

- observe and identify how the child interacts
- support the child's interactions and learning
- observe and identify the child's interests, strengths, preferences, and needs

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Why are everyday activities important? Everyday Activities allow children multiple opportunities to practice existing skills and new skills and they allow the child multiple opportunities to interact with adults and children. They also provide the adult opportunities to observe and identify how the child interacts with objects, settings, and people. They allow the adult multiple opportunities to support the child's interactions and learning and they provide the adult the opportunity to observe and identify the child's interests, strengths, preferences, and needs.



In this video clip you will see a typical classroom activity. Notice how this teacher is paying attention to what the children are doing and their attempts to interact with the blocks. Make notes about how the teacher notices what the children want to do with the blocks.

Let's See It: Block Play - Video 9

Continue

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In this video clip you will see a typical classroom activity. Notice how this teacher is paying attention to what the children are doing and their attempts to interact with the blocks. Make notes about how the teacher notices what the children want to do with the blocks.

Did You Notice? - Video 9

Did you notice how the children were reaching for the blocks they wanted and how the teacher facilitated their play?



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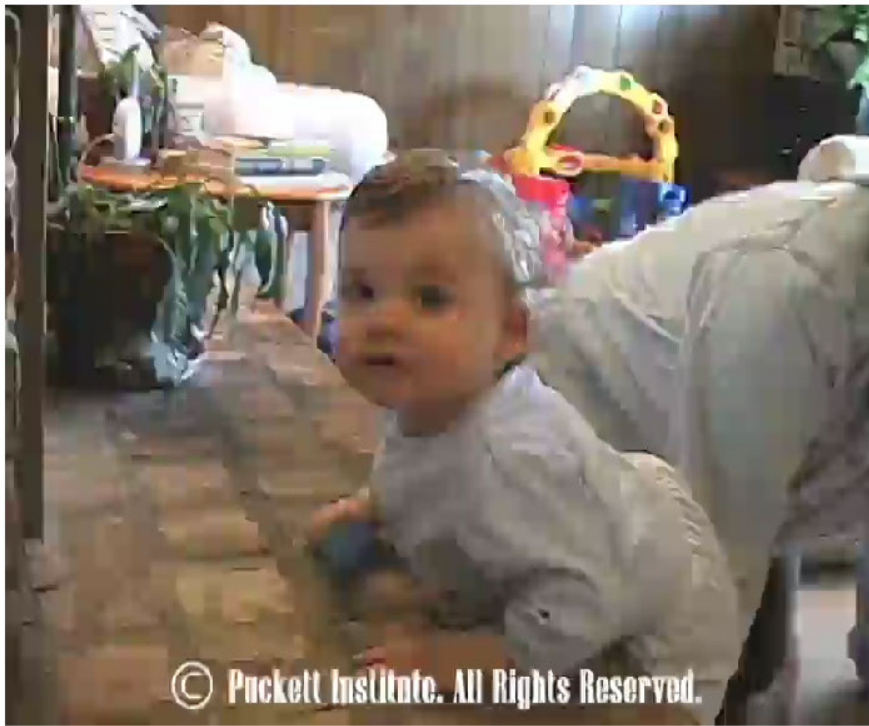
Did you notice how the children were reaching for the blocks they wanted and how the teacher facilitated their play?

Identifying and Observing a Child's Cues and Interests



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You've been introduced to identifying and observing a child's cues and interests. Let's try pulling it all together. Watch the following videos closely. Think about identifying and observing cues and interests. After each, click play to continue and answer a few questions about the video.



You will see a mother and child in their home. Pay attention to behaviors the child uses to interact with his mother. Can you answer these questions?

What behaviors did the son use to interact with his mother?

What did you identify as the child's interests?

How do you know the child was interested in climbing?



Let's See It: Parent/Child Interaction - Video 10

Continue

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You will see a mother and child in their home. Pay attention to behaviors the child uses to interact with his mother. Can you answer these questions? What behaviors did the son use to interact with his mother? What did you identify as the child's interests? How do you know the child was interested in climbing?

Did You Notice? - Video 10



When the child shows an interest in climbing on the hearth, the mother encourages him. She watches him closely, which allows her to notice his cues. When she suggests taking the toy, he makes it clear he wants to keep the toy. This child uses the word “up” further letting his mother know he wants to climb. Finally, he goes into his mother’s arms which lets her know he wants to be held, even if it is brief!

Continue

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When the child shows an interest in climbing on the hearth, the mother encourages him. She watches him closely, which allows her to notice his cues. When she suggests taking the toy, he makes it clear he wants to keep the toy. This child uses the word “up” further letting his mother know he wants to climb. Finally, he goes into his mother’s arms which lets her know he wants to be held, even if it is brief!



In this video, a child is sitting on the porch with her grandmother. Her interest is in “reading” the paper just like her grandmother.

What are the cues or behaviors the child uses to demonstrate interest in “reading” the paper?

Activity: Identifying and observing a child’s cues and interests - Video 11

Continue

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In this video, a child is sitting on the porch with her grandmother. Her interest is in “reading” the paper just like her grandmother. What are the cues or behaviors the child uses to demonstrate interest in “reading” the paper?

Did You Notice? - Video 11



The child verbally identifies what she is looking at in the paper multiple times, she shows the paper to her grandmother until her grandmother responds.

Continue

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The child verbally identifies what she is looking at in the paper multiple times, she shows the paper to her grandmother until her grandmother responds.

Summary



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In this lesson we learned to identify nonverbal and verbal cues and interests of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. We used what we learned to practice using observation to identify and interpret a child's interests, abilities, and emotions. These strategies are an important first step in knowing how to respond to young children's cues. Recall that non-verbal cues can include looking intently at something, smiling, and gesturing. Verbal cues may be vocalizing even if a child isn't using words yet. Remember some children may have the vocabulary to tell you what they are interested in, but other children may silently approach when hoping to interact. Or, they may just quietly notice a person or toy that piques their interest. This may be especially true for children with significant disabilities, who may use more subtle cues to express their interests. For all children, these interactions happen during everyday activities and routines.

Check Your Knowledge



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Now we invite you to check your knowledge with four quick questions.

References and Resources

Module
1

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This concludes Lesson 2. Thank you for participating. For more information, please see these additional resources as well as the practice guides you can use in your setting. After downloading, you can close this window.