

Building on My Child's Strengths

The building blocks of child learning are child strengths. Strengths include behavior a child uses to interact with people and objects and personal interests that motivate a child to do things that are fun and enjoyable. Children's behavior include the skills, abilities, and things that they are good at doing. Children's personal interests include the things they like to do, prefer or choose to do, things that make them smile and laugh, things that excite them, and things that keep them engrossed in play. Strengths-based practices shift the focus of learning from what a child cannot do to what a child can do.

[Watch a video of this guide](#)

Building Blocks

All children have strengths. Recognizing your child's strengths (behavior and interests) is an important part of helping your child learn.

- Start by making a list of your child's strengths. Note behavior your child uses to interact with you and other people and behavior your child uses to interact with toys and other objects.
- In the same way, make a list of your child's interests. Write down the things that excite your child, things your child likes to do, and things that your child prefers to do.
- It is a good idea to observe your child in lots of everyday activities since she is likely to use different behavior and show different interests in different activities.
- Pay particular attention to activities that keep your child involved in interactions with other people, and with toys and other objects. Highlight those behavior and interests.
- Equipping yourself with information about your child's special strengths (behavior and interests) and the activities that "bring out the best" in your child is a simple way to help her learn. Find ways to provide lots of opportunities for your child to be involved in activities that encourage strengths-based learning.



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A Quick Peek

Sixteen-month-old Austin has been receiving early intervention for the past 10 months. Austin's mother Mandy keeps a diary of the things that keep her son involved in different activities and the things he does while involved in the activities. Austin especially enjoys playing different games with his mother — like peek-a-boo with his favorite blanket. He gets excited and smiles and giggles while playing the games. Austin has figured out how to engage his mother in the games by using gestures and the word "more" to let mom know he wants to play. Mandy encourages Austin to do all these things throughout the day in different activities and to use his strengths to initiate interactions and play.

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

- Learning activities encourage your child to use her strengths
- Your child stays involved in everyday activities
- Your child learns new behavior and interests

This practice guide is based upon the following *DEC Recommended Practices*: Assessment 2, 4, 7, 9, 10
 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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