

Ways to gain and maintain your child's attention

Use what your child likes. Your child is more motivated to engage with things they like. Use toys, food, books, music, social games, and activities that you know your child likes.

Position yourself in your child's eyesight. Your child is more likely to notice you when you are at their level, face to face with them. Try sitting on the floor facing each other or sitting your child on your lap facing you. Try having your child sit in a high chair with a tray or at a table and you sit/stand in front of them. In large spaces try using physical boundaries (ex. Gates to block off play areas).

Decrease distractions. Your child is more likely to pay attention to you when they don't have things around them competing for their attention. You want to be the only thing they have to focus on. Turn off TVs, fans, and music. Put away unused toys and other items.

Imitate your child's actions. Your child may find the back and forth turn taking fun. They may be more likely to continue to perform actions to get you to continue to copy them. Make sure your child is watching you when you imitate their actions.

Reinforce their attention. Reward your child when they are actively engaging with you. Your child is more likely to continue attending to you and the activity when they get something out of it. Give them a turn with a desired toy, perform an action they requested (ex. Tickers or spinning), give a piece of a favorite food item, etc.

Be Fun! Your child is more likely to pay attention to you when your actions are playful, exciting, and energetic. And when your words and tone of voice are warm and friendly.

Move around. Your child is more likely to attend when they have opportunities to move around. Alternate sit down activities with movement breaks or activities. Ex After sitting at the table for 5-10 minutes, allow your child to get up and run, jump, or move around as they like. Or do activities that involve movement such as balls, bikes, chasing bubbles, swings, slides, etc....

Use verbal and visual cues. Your child may need to be directed toward what you want them to see. Give your child a verbal cue such as "look" or "watch this" as you point to where you want to attend to.

