

Special Play Guidelines

If provided with a safe, free and protected space, children will naturally work through their experiences through play. In special play-time, children are given permission to express themselves in whatever way they are comfortable and are not required to “talk” (verbally), which often feels intimidating and scary to a child. They are allowed to be messy and are encouraged to explore, choose their own activity. Doing something in a specific or directed way is not required.

The only limit is that if play becomes unsafe, the play session will pause or finish. The experience of a safe adult being with them while they play in whatever way feels right for them gives them the chance to experience a sense of control within boundaries. It gives them an experience of being held safely, while being encouraged to explore enjoyable and challenging experiences. Guidelines for the play facilitator include:

Do:

Allow the child to choose what they play with.

Sit nearby without intruding on their space.

Watch and give eye contact
Engage non-verbally (smile, and encourage play).

Notice and reflect (eg “you’re building that higher”, “all the cars are inside”, “the whole page is red”).

Ignore unwanted behaviour (unless unsafe).

Ask permission before engaging in play
Follow the child’s lead.

Follow through with limits if the child is doing harm to themselves, the toys/room or the play facilitator.

Wait until a child names their work before labelling it.

Wait for an invitation before touching a child’s play.

enjoy every moment.

Don't:

Overstimulate by having too many choices

Provide suggestions or instructions

Give evaluative feedback
(criticism or praise)

Ask questions except for clarifying or permission asking like

Would you like help with that?

Where would you like me to be?

Is it OK for me to play too?