

Promote Equity in Child Care through **QUALITY INTERACTIONS**



POSITIVE
CONNECTIONS

BACK-AND-FORTH
MOMENTS

LIFE SKILLS



Every child is a unique individual.

As an early care and education professional, you understand the importance of getting to know each child individually and building a trusting relationship. Being responsive to each child's needs, learning styles, interests, and experiences through quality interactions is fundamental for ensuring an equitable early learning environment and experiences for all children.

Quality interactions are essential for young children's rapidly developing brains and help prepare them for friends, school, and life. Use these tips to help every child thrive!

Positive connections with you help a child's brain grow strong and flexible.



Positive connections can happen at any time, whether a child is happy, sad, frustrated, or scared. A positive connection in one moment can be sharing a funny joke, singing a song, or trading silly faces or sounds. In another moment it can look like acknowledging a child's needs, accepting and validating their emotions, and responding to what they communicate to you. As you are getting to know each child, observe how they express themselves. Use what you learn about a child to connect in a way that is appropriate for their unique developmental level, abilities, culture, and language.

TIP

MIRROR ME

0-5
YEARS

Children feel many different emotions every day, just like you. Make faces that mirror how your child seems to be feeling. Talk to them about why you're making those faces. "You're smiling and seem happy, and I am smiling and happy too."

Brainy Background™

When you imitate the face your child makes, you help them express what they think and feel even though they can't speak yet. These conversations without words begin to help them learn about others' feelings and emotions!

TIP

PICTURE CONVERSATION

2-5
YEARS

You can create personal stories for your child using pictures that you find in newspapers and magazines. Encourage them to choose a picture and together make up a story based on what they see. If they need help, point out things in the picture by saying, "I wonder where that car is going?"

Brainy Background™

By creating personal stories with your child, you're making stories meaningful and special. When you make up a story by sharing back and forth conversations, you're encouraging their communication and literacy skills.

TIP

MEALTIME MELODIES

0-9
MONTHS

As you feed your child, sing softly and watch how they respond. If they like it, smile and sing even more. If they make some sounds when responding to you, add their sounds to your song so you can make "Mealtime Melodies" together.

Brainy Background™

When you sing with your child and respond to their reactions, they're learning about sounds and words. Learning new sounds and words will help them learn to talk and read in the future.

TIP

HOW ARE YOU?

0-5
YEARS

In a joyful voice ask your child how they are today. Tell them how you are, "I am happy today to see you!" Ask them again and go back and forth. "I am excited today because the sun is shining!" Keep taking turns!

Brainy Background™

When your child hears about your feelings and thoughts and shares their own, they're learning the skill of thinking about the feelings and thoughts of others. This is an important skill in learning to understand and get along with others.

Back-and-forth moments with you build each child's brain in ways that help their learning, health, and behavior both now and in the future.



Children of all ages and abilities are capable of back-and-forth communication with adults. Listen to and watch what interests a child. Pay attention to the sounds, words, signs, faces, gestures, and behaviors they use to express themselves. Then respond in a similar way. Take turns listening and responding, following the child's lead to guide your interactions.

TIP

MUSICAL CONVERSATIONS

0-2
YEARS

As you sing with your child, sing with lots of expression—smiling or looking excited or surprised or sad. Move around or wave your hands. Do they copy your movements or sounds? Repeat their actions and see if you can go back and forth like a game of catch.

Brainy Background™

At this age, your child learns through repetition and back and forth interaction. You help them build communication skills in a fun way when you turn singing into a musical conversation. Your child will use these skills in learning to talk, read, and write.

TIP

ANIMAL RHYMES

2 1/2-5
YEARS

Take turns with your child coming up with Animal Rhymes. You can start by saying something like, "There's a mouse in the house." Then they could say, "A frog sits on a log." Go back and forth coming up with animals and rhyming words. Get creative and silly with your rhymes!

Brainy Background™

When you and your child take turns going back and forth, listening and responding to each other, you help them practice important skills like focus and communicating. Having fun with rhymes and word sounds helps your child learn to love language too!

TIP

THE WHY GAME

2-4
YEARS

Is your child asking you "Why" a lot? Encourage them to ask "Why?" each time you answer. Keep going back and forth. If you don't know the answer, ask them how they think you might figure it out. Then it's your turn to ask "Why?"

Brainy Background™

Your child's questions are a sign of their emerging critical thinking skills. They're trying to understand the way the world works and depend on you for reliable information. When you look for answers together, you're showing them strategies they can use now and in the future.

TIP

FIND THE OPPOSITES

4-5
YEARS

When you're waiting somewhere, ask your child to play "Find the Opposites" with you. You call out something big and they respond with the opposite, something small. Start with easy comparisons, like big and small, high and low, or near and far.

Brainy Background™

When your child learns opposites and distances (near and far), they're learning ideas they'll use in math, science, and reading. Remember, it's always important to play these games in a back and forth way because that is how your child learns best.

Building life skills like focus, self-control, problem-solving, and taking on challenges in their early years helps children today and later in life.



Take advantage of everyday moments to help children practice important life skills. From play time to clean-up, sitting down to a meal or transitioning to a new activity, there are opportunities for early learning and skill-building everywhere! Children of all ages, developmental stages, abilities, and backgrounds will benefit from brain-building moments with trusted adults like you.

TIP

MINI-WORLD

3-5
YEARS

Connect with nature. Make a mini-world using a long string, placed like a circle. Look at the mini-world inside. What do each of you see? Talk about the textures, colors, shapes, and living creatures. Look up and count the clouds, watch for birds, butterflies and insects fluttering by.

Brainy Background™

One of the most important learning skills is focus—paying attention to what is happening around you and noticing details. By talking with your child about what you see in the mini-world, you're helping develop that skill as well as their appreciation for nature.

TIP

SORT & CLEAN

1 1/2-4
YEARS

Encourage your child to sort objects during cleanup. Talk about what you're doing: "All of the small lids go in the little bowl and the big lids go in the big bowl." Then mix it up and ask them to put the small objects in the big bowl. You can also sort by shape or color.

Brainy Background™

Being able to group things by size or color is an important skill. When you switch the rules of the game, you're helping them learn how to think flexibly, use self-control and not go on autopilot.

TIP

CLOSE YOUR EYES

2 1/2-5
YEARS

Today, play a fun game with your child. Have them close their eyes as you place different objects into their hands. Ask them questions to see if they can tell you what they're holding. "Is it furry? Is it soft or hard? What do you think it is?"

Brainy Background™

This game helps your child use the sense of touch to figure out what the object is. They're relating their memory of past experiences to the current situation and they're practicing problem solving, all important to the learning process.

TIP

STACKING TIME

18-36
MONTHS

While you're cooking or cleaning, give your child containers of different sizes, such as plastic food storage containers, for stacking time. Show them how to stack them, then let them have a turn to build. Praise their efforts: "You're working so hard to build that tall tower!"

Brainy Background™

Your child is practicing early science and math concepts like balance and space when they explore and build with different materials. When you encourage them to keep trying, even when things are hard, they're gaining confidence in taking on challenges.



Let's build an **equitable** child care experience for all!

Take the time daily to have quality one-on-one interactions with each child. These interactions can help you build trust with children, provide responsive care, and offer valuable early learning experiences that meet the needs of every child in your care. Quality interactions in child care can make a difference in the lives of children and families.

Get started by identifying Vroom® activities that fit the unique needs of each child.



Visit **[GrowYoungBrains.org](https://www.growyoungbrains.org)** for more information on brain building resources for child care programs.

