

About teachable moments (0-3 years)

What are teachable moments?

Teachable moments happen when you take advantage of a moment in an everyday activity or routine to teach your child something. For example, teachable moments can happen during meals, dressing, playtime, car trips, watching television, or doing family chores. Or even just when you and your child are talking together.

Teachable moments support your child's learning because they expose your child to activities that are challenging, but not overwhelmingly difficult. The teaching should be enjoyable and relatively brief. If it goes on too long your child might lose interest.

Why are teachable moments important?

Teachable moments are an important way to encourage your child's development. When you take advantage of a teachable moment, you are using your child's interests and natural motivation to learn new things. You're also increasing the amount of conversation your child is involved in, which is important for his language development.

Tips to help your child with a teachable moment

One way to create teachable moments is to notice what your child is doing or is interested in and teach him something about it. Try these ideas:

- Name and explain what is happening. For example, if your child is watching you prepare dinner, you could explain that you are cutting up the potatoes so they cook faster.
- Point out something important – for example, 'We're crossing the road now, so we have to watch for cars coming around that corner'.
- Encourage your child to anticipate what will happen next. For example, 'What do you think will happen if you put your cup on the edge of the table like that?'
- If you are counting something, count out loud so your child can hear. Point out words or letters you can see – for example, 'Can you see the word "stop" on that sign? It starts with an "s".'

Give your child lots of praise for trying to learn something new. Show him what to do, then let him have a go on his own. And encourage him to persist if it is a bit difficult – do not limit praise to when he masters the skill. Learning to try new things is more important than getting something right the first time.

Mealtime is a good time to teach your child a new skill, for example:

- 'Can you get your breakfast bowl from the cupboard?'
- 'Can you get the milk from the fridge?'

- 'Where's the cereal?'
- 'Just take three spoonful – one, two, three.'

You can make bath time a teachable moment by asking questions, for example:

- 'Where's the soap?'
- 'Can you make a splash?'
- 'Can you help me count your toes?'

Here are some more ideas for making the most of a teachable moment:

- Expand on what your child has said by repeating and adding words. This will increase your child's vocabulary as well as helping her learn to make sentences.
- Use everyday activities to help your child understand mathematics and numeracy concepts, for example size ('This is very big.'), quantity ('Can you get me two apples?' or 'Would you like some more raisins?'), time ('We will go to the shops in the afternoon.') and temperature ('Don't touch the stove. It is very hot.').
- Pause after speaking to allow time for your child to follow your instruction, answer your question or tell you what he wants to say.
- Build on instructions as your child gets older, from giving your child one instruction to giving two instructions and so on. For example, you could start with, 'Put on your pyjamas' and then move to 'Put on your pyjamas and choose a book that you'd like to read'.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Naughty, naughty monster](#)
- [Monster knows excuse me](#)
- [Mommy, teach me: preparing your preschool child for a lifetime of learning](#)

Engage your child with simple activities at home! Check out some of these things you can do together:

- [Join the Dots](#)
- [What Time Is It?](#)