

Following your child's lead (0-6 years)

What is following your child's lead?

Following your child's lead means watching your child, noticing what he is interested in and getting involved with his activity, without taking over. It doesn't mean redirecting his attention to something different or giving instructions or directions. It is about showing you are interested in him and what he is doing.

Why is it important to follow your child's lead?

When you follow your child's lead, it strengthens your relationship. This helps to make him more confident and secure. You are showing your child that he can communicate with others and control actions and events in his environment. You are also helping him learn and keeping his attention on what he is doing. Without you, he might give up earlier. It also improves his language development, because he is more likely to learn and talk about things he is interested in.

Tips for following your child's lead

You can follow your child's lead at any time, doing any type of activity, but especially when you have the time for play or reading. Here are some ways you can follow your child's lead:

- Stop and watch what your child is looking at or doing so you can get involved in what he is interested in.
- Notice what's attracting his attention and comment. For example, if your child is looking at a bulldozer you could say, 'Wow, that's a big bulldozer. Where have you seen one like that?' Be careful not to redirect your child's attention away from the original source of interest.
- You can encourage your child to respond by asking a general question – for example, 'What can you see?'
- When you are playing together, play what he wants to play, imitate her and really have fun together.
- Let an older child take the lead by supporting his ideas – for example, say 'yes' if he decides to plan a family meal.
- When your child expresses an opinion, use the conversation as a way to learn more about what he thinks and feels.
- Try to listen carefully, and not tell your child what to do or ask a lot of questions.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Angelina's Cinderella](#)
- [You were the first](#)
- [Raising the Best Possible Child: How to parent happy and successful kids from birth to seven](#)