

# General Guidelines for Interacting with Children

Keep the following points in mind during all your interactions with children.

1. Safety must always be your first priority. Intervene immediately when the safety of a child is in question.
2. Be close enough to touch children when you speak to them. Be at the child's eye level whenever possible.
3. Speak in your normal tone of voice, just a bit softer.
4. Listen as much as you talk.
5. Think before you talk. Be conscious of what you say.
6. Watch for and be responsive to children's overt and subtle requests for interaction, including eye contact, smiles, and words.
7. Have physical contact with children often.
8. Tune in to children. Become a good observer.
9. Seek children's ideas and input. Use this information to plan activities or add equipment to extend children's play.
10. Incorporate "concept" words (i.e. color, size, shape, number, relationship to other objects) into your conversations.
11. Share the joy children express in their activities.
12. Use praise sparingly. Praise is appropriate when you want to reinforce developing skills.
13. Mean what you say. If you *cannot follow through* on something, it is probably better not to say it at all.
14. Offer real choices whenever possible.
15. Share yourself- a real, multidimensional, caring, imperfect person.