



OBSERVING AND LEARNING ABOUT CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

Use data from formal and informal observations during routines such as meals, free play and outdoor play, and during daily interactions, to learn about children's interests. Children demonstrate their interests in different ways. Use the information below to guide your observations and planned learning experiences for children.

HOW DO INFANTS LET YOU KNOW WHAT INTERESTS THEM?

When something interests infants, they may:

- turn their heads to look and listen
- roll, push, or crawl toward it
- reach for or grasp the object
- explore objects of interest with their mouths, hands, or feet
- show interest in the same or similar objects over time
- make sounds (e.g., coos, babbles)
- show curiosity, joy, and excitement (e.g., wave their hands, kick their legs, smile)



HOW DO TODDLERS LET YOU KNOW WHAT INTERESTS THEM?

When something interests toddlers, they may:

- show curiosity, joy, and excitement
- point to it or ask you for it (e.g., "I want," "give me")
- grab and play with it for longer periods of time
- want to repeat an activity (e.g., reading the same book, playing with the same toy)
- choose related activities or books
- talk about it (e.g., "Car! Big car. Red car.")



HOW DO PRESCHOOLERS LET YOU KNOW WHAT INTEREST THEM?

When something interests preschoolers, they may:

- show curiosity, joy, and excitement
- spend long periods exploring
- share what they know about it
- ask questions about it
- choose related activities or books
- incorporate it into their play (e.g., draw pictures about it, build with blocks, model with play dough)



To support your observations of children's interests, remember to:

- Observe from the children's level—if they are sitting on the floor, sit with them
- Observe what the child is doing and respond based on the child's interest—follow the child's lead
- Think about your observations now compared to your observations of children in the past—then scaffold, expand, and promote children's learning