

Early Years Team

Introducing routines of play

What is it?

The idea of play routines is to introduce simple, repetitive language and actions around a set activity and reinforce the idea that it is okay to go, do and then finish the activity. This helps children to develop and extend their play skills and language.

The play routine is often introduced and finished using a first and then board and activity cards.

How do I do it?

Choose an activity that the child prefers and introduce a play routine (see example below) with a set phrase e.g. "build a tower" or "music time" and show the appropriate activity card, then play a simple repetitive game.

Whilst pointing to the activity card, gain the child's attention using their name and the set phrase e.g. "T.., build a tower" and encourage them over to a quiet area. Once there, stack 2 bricks while repeating "build a tower" then hand one to the child saying "T..'s turn, build a tower", support this to be successful, then have a turn e.g. "Sarah's turn, build a tower" quickly followed by T..'s again (same language). When there are 5 blocks in total, start counting down, with waiting time so the child has time to make eye contact. Build up the excitement in your voice "5..4..3..2..1...CRASH" using your own or child's hand (as appropriate) to knock the tower down. Repeat. Finish the game before the child loses interest using "build a tower, finished" with clear gesture and remove activity card from the board.

What next?

Put out the equipment/resources used in the play routine as a free play activity to allow the child to use the rehearsed skills and ideas independently. Build up a range of different play routines to introduce different skills.