



IES Grant #
R324A160086

Teach Strategy Play alone

Teaching your child to play alone increases their independence and reduces challenging behavior that might occur when your attention is not available! Use the steps below to teach your child to play independently for short periods of time.



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1

Identify short periods of time (5-10 min) during your day when you can spend time providing positive attention to your child.

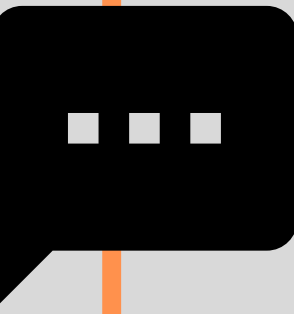
Positive attention can include things like playing with toys, going for a walk, or reading a book together.



2

Provide a warning that you will be done playing with them soon and they will have to play alone. For example, you could say "I have to go do something now, so you'll have to play by yourself for a little bit. I'll be back!"

Leave the area for a short period of time (start with 30s and gradually increase).



3

- Respond with minimal attention to appropriate requests for your attention during this time (ex: "Wait please"). Do not respond to inappropriate requests.
- After your child has played alone for about 30 seconds, provide lots of positive descriptive feedback for playing alone and join them in play again!
- If your child begins to engage in challenging behavior, stay calm and avoid attending to the behavior.



4

Repeat this process several times throughout the day. Gradually increase the time your child plays alone before providing attention and feedback!

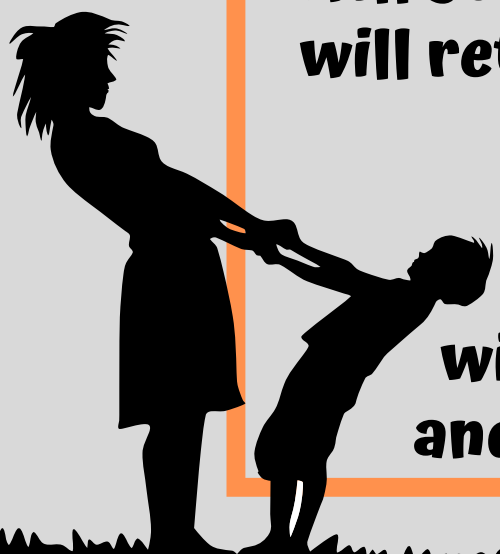
Try not increase the time you are having your child play alone too fast! You might initially increase the time your child plays alone by 30 seconds, then a minute until your child is playing alone for about 5 minutes without feedback and attention.



5

When teaching your child to play alone, you should join your child in play and provide positive attention before and after they practice playing alone. This will build your child's confidence that you will return soon!

Playing alone can be difficult, so start out by providing your child with some highly preferred activities and toys to play with!



Helpful Hints!

- Identify a hand signal (index finger up), gesture (sign for wait), or visual (stop sign) to visually cue your child to that your attention is unavailable.
- Pair this cue with a short statement that lets your child know when you will be available again (ex: "in 1 min" or "wait please").
- Be sure to return to your child after a short time and build up to longer times without your attention.



For more information on teaching your child new skills, [click here](#).

