

Engaging Infants and Toddlers at Outside Time

The What, Why, and How

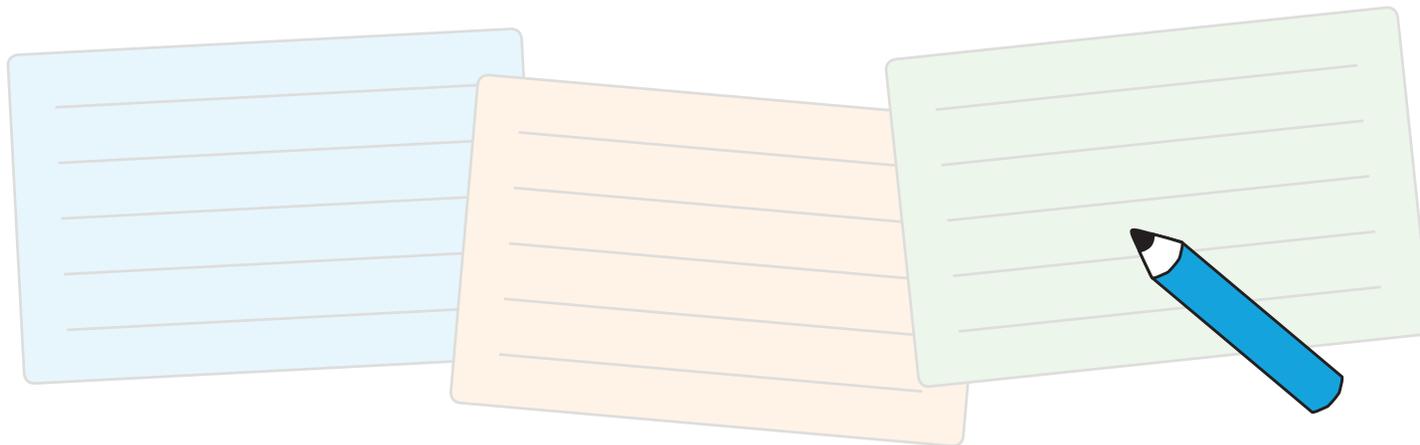
Week 3 Learning Unit

Adult Support During Outside Time



Let's Reflect...

Before we begin this week's learning unit, take a few moments to reflect on and jot down some notes about your current adult-child interactions during outside time.



Week 3 Learning Unit Topics

Adult Support During Outside Time:

- Provide loose materials for children's comfort and play.
- Provide a variety of experiences for nonmobile infants.
- Use the same general support strategies used at choice time.
- Observe nature with children.
- Bring outside time to a gentle close.



Provide Loose Materials for Children's Comfort and Play

- Nonmobile infants spend most of their time outdoors lying on blankets spread on the ground. Caregivers should keep some clean blankets in a basket or diaper bag that can be easily grabbed on the way out to the play yard.
- Some older mobile infants may at first be hesitant to crawl or cruise around outdoors. They often appreciate being given a basket of interesting objects to explore while sitting on a blanket until they work up the courage to find things to explore.
- Place loose materials in wagons, small buckets, baskets, or cloth bags with handles so toddlers can carry out their sand toys, tennis balls, streamers, bubble blowing equipment, sidewalk chalk, etc.



Reflect on loose materials for children's comfort and play that you can incorporate to reflect families' cultures and outdoor hobbies. For example, a dad enjoys playing tennis at a neighborhood club, so you add a bucket of tennis balls to your outdoor space.

Provide a Variety of Experiences for Nonmobile Infants

- Nonmobile infants depend on caregivers to put them in a safe location where they can easily stretch, wiggle, and watch interesting things.
- Vary the safe place from time to time to diversify their experiences and the sights they see, (i.e., blooming flowers, the sky and clouds, waving banners).
- As caregivers carry babies outside and back inside again, they stop so the babies can have a close-up look at things they walk by, (i.e., a pine tree, a rabbit in a cage).



Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time

In many ways, outside time is choice time moved outdoors.

Once caregivers have moved infants and toddlers and their materials safely outdoors, they can use the same strategies used to support children at choice time:

- Pay close attention to children as they explore and play.
 - Tailor actions and responses to follow children's leads and ideas.
 - Engage in give-and-take communication with children.
 - Support children's interactions with peers.
 - Use a problem-solving approach to children's social conflicts.
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- Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall.
 - Encourage toddlers to put materials away after choice time.

Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Pay close attention to children as they explore and play

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joining children at their level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, laying on your back next to an infant as you both look up at the sky or sitting in the sandbox with a toddler. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching and listening carefully to understand what individual children are doing; communicating and carefully considering each child's choices and intentions so the caregiver can interact and respond in a meaningful way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, the caregiver watches Tyler crawl to the fence, look up at the wind chime, and smile and coo as it makes sounds in the wind. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being ready and available when children need comfort and contact by providing a "home base" children can come back to before heading out again on their own. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, while drawing with sidewalk chalk, a child hears the sirens of a firetruck going by. They run over to the caregiver and sits on their lap for a few minutes before they start drawing again. |
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Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Tailor actions and responses to follow children's leads and ideas

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

- Take a participatory approach by heeding, responding to, and building on children's communications and actions instead of ignoring or overriding them.
- For example, an infant is sitting on a blanket outside with a tissue box filled with pieces of fabric between their legs. They smile as they pull pieces out one by one. The caregiver watches the infant do this and responds, "You like pulling the pieces of fabric out of the box. I'm pulling a piece out and feeling it with my hands. This one is soft. It is a velvet material."
- Respect children's initiatives and their desire to figure things out on their own by remaining attentively present and offer encouragement by describing what children see.
- For example, "You're using a lot of different shovels and bottles to fill up the big bucket with sand."

Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Engage in give-and-take communication with children

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

- Encourage the child to set the pace and freely contribute to each interchange. Match, don't ignore or override, the child's contributions.
- For example, while playing in the sandbox a child dumps out his bucket of sand and says, "Castle!" The caregiver responds, "You made a castle."

- Incorporate children's nonverbal contributions (i.e., sounds, gestures, and actions) into their part of the conversation.
- For example, the caregiver imitates the facial expression an infant makes as the wind blows and says, "Wow! That was a surprise gush of wind we just felt."

- Use questions sparingly, but rather focus on using comments, observations, and acknowledgments to keep conversational exchanges going.
- For example, while using water wheels in the water table the caregiver points to the wheel and asks, "How is that spinning?" The child continues to pour water in the top of the wheel and says, "Spin!" The caregiver replies, "I notice when you pour the water in the top, it makes the wheel spin."

Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Support children’s interactions with peers

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for and acknowledge peer preferences as infants and toddlers communicate their interest in each other. • For example, as two infants sit on a blanket together, the caregiver notices one child gazing at the other and says, “Imani, you’re watching Alex shake the bells from the basket.” | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide equipment that allows children to play side by side. • For example, wide slides, climbers, and blankets. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide two or more similar materials so children can play with materials together and try out each other’s actions. • For example, wheeled toys, shovels, and buckets. |
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Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Support children's interactions with peers (continued)

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

- Provide play materials that two or three toddlers can gather around and still retain individual control of.
 - For example, a sand and water table.
- Describe children's intentions toward their peers. This helps to facilitate toddlers' attempts at social play.
 - For example, while several children are blowing bubbles, Donnie stands and watches. Eliza hands him a bubble wand and Donnie pushes it away. The caregiver says, "Eliza you want to share one of your bubble wands with Donnie, but he just wants to watch right now."

Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Use a problem-solving approach to children's social conflicts

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

Steps in Resolving Conflicts

1. Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.

- Place yourself between the children, on their level.
- Use a calm voice and gentle touch.
- Remain neutral rather than take sides.

2. Acknowledge children's feelings.

- Name and describe the children's feelings: "You're upset."
- Let children know you need to hold the object in question.

3. Gather information.

- With infants and younger toddlers, observe children's actions and describe the problem: "It looks like the problem is _____. Is that right?" Then look and listen for their acknowledgement.
- Ask older toddlers "what" questions: "What happened?"

4. Restate the problem.

- Repeat the information you have observed or heard: "So the problem is..."

5. Ask for children's ideas for solutions, and choose one together.

- Encourage children to think of a solution: "What can we do to solve this problem?"
- With infants and younger toddlers, describe choices or describe the solution they spontaneously carry out.
- Ask older toddlers for ideas and agreements.
- Check to make sure the solution is acceptable to both children.

6. Provide follow-up support.

- Tell the children, "You solved the problem!"
- Stay nearby to support the solution.

Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Offer older toddlers opportunities to plan and recall

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

PLANNING (thinking about what you are going to do before you do it)

- Provide one-on-one, simple, brief opportunities for children to plan what they will do at outside time
- Ask questions or make statements that a child can respond to with an action, gesture, or word:
 - What will you play with, Jace?
 - Show me where you want to play, Alexis.
 - What will you do at outside time, Zach?

RECALLING (remembering and reflecting on what you did after you did it)

- Provide one-on-one, simple, brief opportunities for children to recall what they did at outside time
- Ask questions or make statements that a child can respond to with an action, gesture, or word:
 - I saw you and Jayden hiding under the climber, tell me about what you were doing.
 - Joshua, it is time to clean up and go back inside let's put the sand molds back in the container. What did you do with the sand molds you were playing with?

Use the Same General Support Strategies Used at Choice Time (continued)

Choice Time Strategy

Encourage toddlers to put materials away after choice time

What the Strategy Looks Like at Outside Time

- Put materials away along with the children and be willing to accept toddlers' ideas about how to do things.
- For example:
 - At the end of outside time, the caregiver and toddlers who were reading books under the tree work together to put all the books back in the basket and fold the blanket they were sitting on.
 - At the end of outside time, Brayden puts the balls he was playing with into the wagon, pulls it to the storage shed, turns over the wagon, dumps out the balls onto the ground, and heads back to load some more materials into the wagon.

Reflect on how families' methods of cleaning up at home impact their child's approach to putting materials away.

Observe Nature With Children

- Appreciate children's actions and interests and comment on or acknowledge them when it is natural to do so rather than overwhelming them with a barrage of words or lengthy explanations about what they are seeing and doing.
- Allow children plenty of time to stop and smell the flowers, watch the worms in the dirt, shuffle through the leaves, and pick up yet another stick.
- Adults should be mindful of any aversions they have to the outdoors so as not to pass along their fears or disgust to children.

How do you gather information from families about their outdoor experiences and incorporate those ideas at outside time?



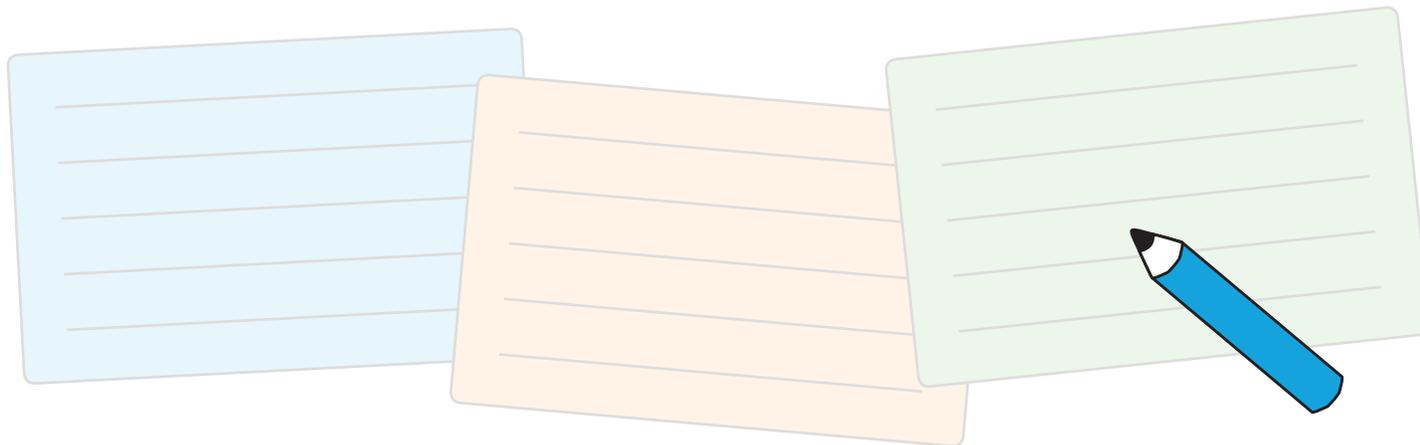
Bring Outside Time to a Gentle Close

- Around five minutes before the end of outside time, caregivers tell children that outside time is almost over.
- Even though children may not know exactly what an adult is saying or singing to bring outside time to a close, eventually they will associate the same ritual phrase or song with rounding up the toys and moving to the next part of the routine.
- Even with infants, it is important to let them know you are picking them up, folding up their blanket, and carrying them inside.



Reflecting Back...

Referring back to the notes you wrote down before reviewing this week's learning unit, reflect on your current practices and how you can incorporate the outside time strategies in this learning unit with your children.



A Peek Ahead

Next week, you will explore:

- The Infant-Toddler Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs)
- How KDIs can be incorporated during outside time.
- Intentionally using materials to create KDI experiences.

