

## Tips to increase children's motivation: Suggestions for families and staff

Children's motivation levels can vary for a range of reasons. Like adults, they can be motivated to do some activities more than others. Sometimes children can be less motivated because they feel tired or unwell. Some children are less or more motivated because of their temperament or personal style. This tells us that motivation is complex and can be influenced by many factors. Whilst many factors are not in the control of parents and carers, there are a number of things you can do to support children to become curious, confident and motivated learners.

What are some things that you could do to increase children's motivation?

What might you do to encourage a child who may not be motivated to do a particular type of activity?

How might you further extend a child who is already highly motivated?



### How can families and early childhood staff guide children's motivation in the early years?

There are many ways parents, carers and staff can support children's developing motivation. Providing an interesting environment that can be explored in the presence of a warm, caring and trusted adult is essential for supporting children's curiosity and motivation. Supporting children's learning and gradually reducing your involvement over time helps children to learn how to complete similar activities in the future. Asking children questions, talking them through activities and praising their efforts can all help children become engaged in their learning. Parents and carers can further extend children's developing motivation by providing experiences that are appropriate for their child's age group; some examples are listed.



Infants: Birth to 18 months	Toddlers: 18 months to three years	Preschoolers: three to five years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide toys or objects that change when squeezed, touched or moved (e.g., mobiles that respond to a child's movements, objects that make sounds when rattled)</li> <li>▶ Provide objects with interesting textures, smells and tastes</li> <li>▶ Play games such as 'peek a boo' and other games with actions</li> <li>▶ Respond to smiles, coos and sounds by repeating them back</li> <li>▶ Sing simple songs that are easy enough for the child to repeat</li> <li>▶ Provide sturdy push toys with handles for walking practice</li> <li>▶ Provide objects that have a number of uses (e.g., toys with buttons, levers, lights).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Provide activities that involve a number of steps (e.g., putting together wooden pieces of a train track and connecting a magnetic train, 5–10 piece wooden puzzles, plastic cooking sets)</li> <li>▶ Play games that increase in difficulty (e.g., starting off playing catch with a large ball and gradually reducing the ball size)</li> <li>▶ Provide simple matching and sorting games (e.g., card games)</li> <li>▶ Reading simple 'pop up' books</li> <li>▶ Make simple rhythm instruments (e.g., bottles part filled with rice) to play to accompanying music</li> <li>▶ Provide 'housecleaning' toys (e.g., spray bottles filled with water, dustpans and brushes).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Encourage children to talk through what they are doing and why they are doing it</li> <li>▶ Provide opportunities for children to set their own goals and to talk about their play</li> <li>▶ Provide toys and objects for more complex activities (e.g., measuring cups, dress-up and pretend play props, puppets)</li> <li>▶ Introduce games with rules, such as picture bingo and matching games</li> <li>▶ Support children's opportunities to build relationships in their play.</li> </ul>

## Children can motivate each other

Children's motivation doesn't always need to be facilitated by adults. Children can be very good at motivating each other. Providing group activities where children can work together supports learning and developing motivation. Other ideas for getting children to motivate each other include:

- ▶ Encourage children to work together on a group project (e.g., building a cardboard cubby house, making a collage) where everyone has a specific role.
- ▶ Reward children for helping others during a group activity.
- ▶ Ask groups of children to volunteer for a particular job and make it as attractive as possible (e.g., children who volunteer to look after the library section may get to wear special hats).
- ▶ Involve children in making up rules for how to behave during specific times or in particular areas (e.g., meal times, story time, the quiet area, and the outdoor area).

For more information on these suggestions refer to *Component 2: Developing children's social and emotional skills 'Children and play'*.



This resource and further information on the national KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative is available to download at [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au). The KidsMatter Early Childhood team also welcomes your feedback which can be submitted through the website.



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