



OBSERVING AND LEARNING ABOUT CHILDREN'S INTERESTS

Notice and learn about children's personal interests during home visits and socializations. Encourage parents to do the same. Children ages birth to five demonstrate their interests differently. Use the information below to help guide your observations and planned activities with families.

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 the objects with their mouths, hands, or feet
- show interest in the same object 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., “Look at the big car. Small car. Red car.”)



HOW DO PRESCHOOLERS LET YOU KNOW WHAT INTERESTS 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, write words, build with blocks, model with play dough)



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

- Observe from the child's level—if they are sitting on the floor, sit with them; encourage parents to do the same
- Encourage parents to listen and look before starting an interaction or offering a specific object—observe what the child is doing and respond based on the child's interest
- Think about your observations now compared to your observations of children in the past—then support parents as they scaffold, expand, and promote children's learning