



# BE HAPPY

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# SUN SKILLS

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The University of Texas at Tyler School of Medicine

## The SUN Skills: What to Do During Special Playtime

The goal of special playtime is to help your child feel connected to you and to create an enjoyable interaction. The acronym SUN can help you remember the key skills to make your special playtime successful!



### S — SAY GOOD THINGS YOU LIKE

Tell your child exactly what you like about what they are doing.

Examples:

- “Thank you for sharing that toy with me!”
- “I am having so much fun playing with you!”



### U — USE THEIR WORDS

Repeat or imitate what your child says or does to show you are listening and engaged.

Examples:

- Child: “I stacked my blocks high.”  
Adult: “You stacked those blocks really high!”
- “I’m going to put the Legos together just like you.”



### N — NAME WHAT YOU SEE

Describe your child’s actions during play.

Examples:

- “You’re feeding the baby doll a bottle.”
- “You are building a tall tower.”





## What NOT to Do During Special Playtime

To keep playtime positive and child-led, avoid the following behaviors.



### AVOID DISTRACTIONS

- Turn off screens and put phones away
- Pause chores and work
- Arrange care or activities for other children



### AVOID QUESTIONS

**Instead of asking:**

- “What color is that?”

**Try describing:**

- “You are grabbing the red ball.”



### AVOID COMMANDS

**Instead of commanding:**

- “Put the car on the track.”

**Try describing:**

- “You are deciding what to do with the car.”



### AVOID CRITICISM

**Avoid:**

- “That is not how the toy works.”
- “That is a silly way to do that.”
- “You finally did it the right way.”

**Try describing:**

- “You are playing with the toy.”

## TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SPECIAL PLAYTIME

- Pick a 10-minute time that works for your family everyday.
- Be consistent and avoid skipping special playtime. Do not remove special playtime as a consequence.
- Plan for one-on-one time with a caregiver and child.
- Allow child to choose the toys and activities.
- Encourage interactive toys and games; avoid incorporating screens or chores into special playtime.
- Have fun!



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