



Learning About Time

Time is difficult for young children to understand, but when things are the same each and every day, children develop a general awareness of time. Through daily living, children slowly learn that certain things, like the start of the school day, the dinner hour, or bedtime, happen at a specific time each day. While young children cannot “tell time” or read clocks, exposure to these techniques give children the basic skills they need for later learning.

Parents play an important role in building their children's understanding of time. You can:

Infants & Toddlers

- Make a schedule for your child. Have regular times for eating, bathing, and going to bed. This will help your baby know what to expect and when to expect it. No matter who is caring for your child, your child's routine should be the same.
- Talk about the day. Ask your child to recall everything that happened during the day.
- Use “first / then” phrases, such as “first we wash our hands, then we eat a snack.”
- List specific sequences (or order) of events. For example, say: “Mommy will come back after naptime.”
- Add an old or pretend watch to the “dress up” clothes; encourage your toddler to use it during pretend play. Ask your child what time it is!

Preschoolers

- Use “time words” – soon, later, early, before, after, yesterday, today, tomorrow, next week, morning, noon and evening.
- Include the time or day of the week when talking with your child. For example, say: “It's 12 o'clock! Time for lunch.” “The cookies will be ready in one minute.” Or, “It is Tuesday. You have dance class on Tuesday.”
- Hang a wall calendar in your child's room; every morning, let her draw an “X” on the specific day.
- Be a weatherman! Have your child look out the window and tell you about the weather. Is it sunny, cloudy, rainy, or snowy? Have your child draw a sun, clouds, raindrops or snowflakes on each day of a wall calendar.

Book Suggestions

About Time: A First Look At Time by Bruce Koscielniak

While You Are Sleeping: Lift-the-Flap Book of Time From Around the World by Durga Bernhard