



Comfort Play & Teach:

A Positive Approach to Parenting™

Every Day

Resting and Relaxing with Your Child

Parents and children's lives can be very busy when there are so many things to do such as work, shopping and chores. It is important to take time to relax and to enjoy being still when everything seems to be moving so quickly. Here are some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activities that will help parents make the most of quieter times with your infant, toddler or preschooler.



Comfort

If you do this:

- Maintain a regular bedtime routine that includes calm stories and quiet music
- Gently massage your child if he feels comfortable with this

Your child will:

- Learn that sleeping well is part of caring for herself as she shares this time with you each day
- Look forward to these loving interactions with you and enjoy the sensation of being touched



Play

If you do this:

- Explore yoga with your child and try different animal stretches (e.g., lion, dog, crane, cobra)
- Listen to calming music and enjoy trying to picture relaxing situations like floating on a cloud

Your child will:

- Enjoy moving her body in creative ways and find out how relaxing it is to stretch and breathe deeply
- Use his imagination and discover how easy it is to be someplace magical without going anywhere



Teach

If you do this:

- Exercise regularly by going for walks in the neighbourhood or playing in the park together
- Enjoy sensory activities together like water and sand play, or shaping and squeezing playdough

Your child will:

- Strengthen her developing physical skills (e.g., running, climbing) and learn new ways to feel healthy
- Be able to release any tension he might feel as he explores the qualities of his play materials (e.g., wet, dry, soft, squishy)



For more information visit www.investinkids.ca

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Ten Ideas for Resting and Relaxing with Your Child

1. Choose bedtime stories like *The Sleepy Book* by Charlotte Zolotow or *Hush Little Baby* by Sylvia Long. The soothing words will help your child relax and to feel more ready for sleep.
2. Make time for quiet activities like colouring, looking at books and having a teddy bear tea party. Your child can look forward to doing something restful after playtime that has required a lot of her energy.
3. Provide soothing play materials for your child including finger paints, playdough, cornstarch goop, or water and sand with props like scoops, plastic measuring cups and spoons. Your child can release tension while exploring with her senses and learning about concepts such as wet and dry, full and empty.
4. Include physical activities each day, for example, walking or playing simple games like “Simon Says.” This will help your child get adequate exercise, feel healthy and get more restful sleep.
5. Spread out a blanket under a tree and search for shapes in the clouds. This is a very calming activity that also encourages your child to use his imagination and explore his creativity.



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6. Play tranquil music in the background while enjoying daily routines like diapering, bathing, feeding and playing. Selections like lullabies, classical and New Age music can create a calm mood for enjoying different activities.
7. Consider exploring yoga with your child. You will both enjoy stretching, breathing deeply and relaxing as you pretend to be different animals such as cats, dogs, lions, cobras and cranes.
8. Try to slow down and take time to notice things around you in your neighbourhood. Follow your child's lead. If he stops to look at a flower or to listen to a bird's song, stop too. You will enjoy simple and quiet moments like this together.
9. Enjoy massaging your baby. It is a loving experience that enhances bonding, gives parents a chance to understand their baby's cues, supports a baby's healthy growth and development and encourages feelings of relaxation.
10. Plan a backyard picnic or bring a blanket and food basket to a nearby park or beach. Sitting outdoors and getting some sun and fresh air is a lovely way to relax and to take time for talking, daydreaming and enjoying each other's company.



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Comfort, Play & Teach™ Checklist: Resting and Relaxing

Comfort

- Lullabies and quiet stories are a regular part of my child's bedtime routine. They give us special time together and are very calming.
- I gently massage my baby when diapering or bathing him. This is a lovely way for us to bond and it helps him to relax.
- My child and I plan special outings together like walks or picnics in the park. It gives us time to talk and to enjoy some quiet time together.

Play

- My child's play materials include playdough, sand, water, finger paint and cornstarch goop. Sensory materials like these are very calming and soothing to play with.
- Quiet activities we enjoy together after a busy day include colouring, playing with puppets, looking at books and listening to music.
- When we play outside, my child and I stop to notice little things happening, like ants collecting food or the sound of leaves rustling. This helps us to slow down.



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Teach

- We balance physical activities with quiet time so that my child understands the importance of relaxing after using a lot of energy as he plays.

- I show my child different ways to calm down that include stretching and breathing deeply. This helps him to relax when he is overexcited or feeling anxious.

- We look at books together that help us feel relaxed. The library has lots of choices like *Good Night Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown.



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Tender Touch

Infant massage has many benefits. It is relaxing and soothing, it promotes healthy physical and mental development and it can deepen the connection between parent and baby as her cues and needs are understood and responded to. Massaging a baby provides a special opportunity for tender and loving **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together.

Materials You Will Need

- A soft place for your baby to lie down where there is no risk of falling
- A towel

Instructions

- Slowly and rhythmically stroke your baby's body, applying only comfortable pressure.
- During the massage, make eye contact with your baby. Smile and make faces – stick out your tongue, blink your eyes, make sounds with your lips. This adds to his enjoyment of looking at the face of someone who loves him.
- Talk about what you are doing during the massage, describing your actions and naming your baby's body parts.
- **Pay attention to your baby's cues.** If he cries or turns away, discontinue the massage and try another time.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Skin to skin contact will help to create a special bond with your baby and encourage him to discover the kind of touch he likes.



Play: Recite a silly nursery rhyme like *Pat-a-cake* as you gently touch your baby. You will strengthen the communication between you and your baby and stimulate her to listen to the sounds and rhythm of language.



Teach: Talking to your baby during the massage will help him feel that he is participating in a conversation with you, and introduce him to words he will eventually use.

Bottles, Blankets and Bears

Role playing helps your child to build important language and thinking skills. Through using props to pretend, your child can imitate what she has seen you do and practice talking, sharing and caring. Join your child's imaginative play and enjoy the **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time you spend together.

Materials You Will Need

- Pretend play props (e.g., doll, small bottle, blanket)

Instructions

- When you introduce make-believe toys to your child such as dolls with accompanying props like a small bottle, board book, blanket or doll, he can recreate the familiar caring and nurturing actions he has experienced himself.
- Your child learns by exploring and handling a variety of materials. She will feel the softness of the blanket when she tucks in her doll, see bright pictures when she pretends to read a story and imagine the sweet taste of applesauce when she feeds her teddy bear.
- Pretend play gives your child the chance to practice using many different words that have become familiar to him through interactions with you.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Comment on how gentle and loving your child is being and what a good parent he is. This will build your child's self-esteem.



Play: Your child's senses will be engaged as she pretends to care for a baby. Provide props with different shapes, colours and textures.



Teach: Pretend play builds important language skills. Your child can try to use words related to feeding and diapering, and might even try to sing a lullaby he knows when he puts baby bear to bed!

Lullaby Blanket

Playing music in the background while exploring art materials can encourage your child to use his imagination. This **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity will let you and your child dream up new ideas through creative art.

Materials You Will Need

- A beautifully illustrated bedtime book
- A recording of lullabies (vocal or instrumental)
- Construction paper in pastel colours
- Paint (tempera or water colour)
- Brushes, crayons, markers, chalk, pastels or drawing pencils that are in soft colours

Instructions

- Read the lullaby book to your preschooler and talk about the pictures and the colours. What does your child think of the artwork? Then play some soothing music in the background as your child draws and paints.
- As she draws, talk to her about bedtime and what she enjoys most about it. Encourage her to think about what makes her feel calm and relaxed and to use the art materials to create a picture that shows how she feels.
- She can make many drawings or paintings and, when these are complete, display them so that they look like a cozy quilt.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Painting and drawing to peaceful and calming background music can evoke different emotions and provide a way for your child to express both his creativity and his feelings. Try lullabies, classical or New Age music.



Play: Your preschooler can explore different designs through creative art – dreamy dots, sleepy squiggles, zzzzig-zzzzags. How many other ways can you and your child describe the art that she creates?



Teach: Listening to different styles of music can show your child how different composers and musicians express their feelings. It might also help him to discover what sparks his imagination. He will discover new ways to express his ideas through creative art.

Rocking the Baby

This is a **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity that will encourage your child to sing a familiar lullaby to a doll while she role-plays a nurturing bedtime routine.

Materials You Will Need

- A small doll
- A scarf
- A familiar lullaby (e.g., *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* or *Rock-a-bye Baby*)

Instructions

- Sing a lullaby to your child and encourage him to lie down and relax while he listens. If he knows the words he can join you in singing them.
- Place a small doll onto a scarf and invite your child to grasp two corners of the scarf.
- While you sing the lullaby together, gently rock the doll back and forth. Until your child learns the words, he can hum or “la-la” the melody.
- With each repetition of this activity, explore new lullabies that you and your child are learning.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Lullabies can be a very soothing and nurturing part of a sleep time routine, providing you and your child with an opportunity to bond.



Play: Pretending to rock a doll to sleep encourages your child to use her imagination as she imitates her own experiences of being nurtured.



Teach: Singing songs repeatedly helps your child learn and remember lyrics and imitate familiar melodies.