

Making Bath Time Fun



Not all children like bath time yet learning to bathe safely and more independently is an important developmental skill. There are ways you can make this a fun learning experience for your child.

Before you start

- Lay out everything you need including a towel, soap and shampoo, nappy, clothes to change into, and bath toys. This will ensure that children aren't left cold and wet while waiting for you to find the towel.
- Your child will feel more included and will be more likely to co-operate if they are part of the preparation process. They will also be learning about the importance of planning ahead.
- Consider dimming lights or heating the room to make it cosier and more welcoming.

During the bath

Use this routine to develop independence and self-help skills by encouraging children to wash themselves.

- Help children to lather and rub soap on their skin to wash any dirt they can see but also to understand there may be dirt they can't see.
- Sing heads and shoulders, knees, and toes to help them to identify and wash different body parts.
- If brushing teeth is usually an issue, consider allowing children to brush their teeth while still in the bath.
- Teach how to rinse soap off, then how to dry their skin using a towel.
- Help explain how feeling clean will help them feel and smell great too.

Keeping it Safe

- Never leave children unattended in the bath.
- Avoid slipping by wiping up spills as soon as possible.
- Consider using a non-slip mat inside the bath or shower and on the bathroom floor.
- Test the water temperature. A good way is to hold the back of your hand (the part that is more sensitive) in the running water.
- Where possible, cover the faucet with a foam noodle or towel to avoid children from knocking against it.

When children are fearful of the water

- Fill the tub before they enter the bathroom if they fear the sound of running water.
- Provide a bucket and beaker and encourage children to pour water on themselves in an empty bath.
- Some children have a fear of being sucked down the drain or are frightened by the sound it makes. Again, only pull out the plug once they have left the bathroom or consider using a smaller tub inside the bathtub.
- Washing dolls or other waterproof toys helps build confidence especially if the child sees that the toys do not go down the drain when the water is released.
- Encourage blowing bubbles with their faces in the water.
- Getting into the tub with your child will allow you to comfort them.
- Use a shampoo shield or swimming goggles for children afraid of getting water in their eyes.



Opportunities for learning

- **Sensory:** Bath time is a multisensory experience as children feel the temperature of the water, hear the splashing, see the water's colourless state, smell the soap or shampoo used and taste the bubbles that are blown.
- **Language:** Bath time can be a fun way to teach children new words, phrases, and rhymes e.g., wash, scrub, splish splash, blow/pop bubbles and to teach body parts.
- **Fine Motor:** Adding sponges and squeeze toys strengthens hands and fingers.
- **Cognitive:** Filling and emptying containers promotes maths and science concepts of full and empty, water volume, more and less, things that float or sink.
- **Social:** Bath time promotes joint attention and turn taking skills.

Making it Fun

- Lather up hair into funny shapes or make a soapy beard and provide an acrylic safety mirror for children to see.
- Add a squirt bottle for children to submerge, then squeeze.
- Parallel washing with a doll. Parent washes child's legs, child washes the doll's legs etc.
- Put a few balloons in the tub that can be bounced on the water or bat around.
- Add some glow sticks to the water to make it glow.
- Sing! Look up some bath songs to sing in the bath. This is one of many.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5fdq8xNQcI



Bath time visual

A visual sequence can help children to understand the steps involved in bath time.



Do you need more resources?

- [Bath time for toddlers | Raising Children Network](#)
- [Bath time learning activities: 0-2 years | Raising Children Network](#)
- Ask your Start Strong Pathways Educator to help with ideas around the bath time routine. They can help with making visuals and making a plan.
- Does your child have an Occupational Therapist? Let them know you are working on making bath time a more engaging time with your child. Check in with them about some calming strategies for your child or for other resources.
- Does your child have a Speech Pathologist? They can help you with visuals as well as other resources to engage your child during bath time.

References

- www.aota.org/About-Occupational-Therapy/Patients-Clients/ChildrenAndYouth/Bathtime.aspx
- www.tandemspeechtherapy.com/2017/07/06/playing-with-purpose-bath-time
- www.kandookids.com/blog/tips-tricks-make-bath-time-fun