

# Special Needs in Daycare

Helping Children Join In



## How can I help a child participate without pressure?

Use the “success ramp”:

- Watch
- Try with help
- Try alone
- Join the group

Watching is still learning.



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## What are “First–Then” steps (and why do they work)?

First–Then shows what’s happening now and what comes next:

- “First sit, then bubbles.”
  - “First cleanup, then playground.”
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## What are quick strategies that boost participation?

Try one or two at a time:

- **Two choices:** “Book or blocks?”
  - **Helper job:** “Hold the picture card.”
  - **Countdown:** “5...4...3...2...1...clean up!”
  - **Mini goal:** “Touch the mat, then you can take a break.”
  - **Join for one part:** “Come for one song.”
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## What if a child refuses?

- Offer a smaller step.
  - Offer a choice again.
  - Let them start nearby.
  - Praise tiny progress: “You came closer!”
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## How do I know if the activity is too hard right now?

Look for signs the child needs support:

- turns away or hides
- drops to the floor
- throws materials
- escalates quickly during transitions
- cries/yells when directions start

Try: shorten the activity, add visuals, offer a break, or switch to a helper job.

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## What are “break” options that still keep the child included?

A break doesn't mean “sent away.” Try:

- sit in the calm corner with a timer
  - squeeze a sensory item (if allowed)
  - do wall push-ups
  - hold a book near the group
  - stand at the edge of the rug
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## What should I track so I can help tomorrow?

Keep it simple:



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- What time of day was hardest?
- What worked (choice, job, break, visuals)?
- How long could they participate today?
- What was the child trying to communicate?



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