

# 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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