

A child's experiences in the first few years of life have a physical impact on the formation of their brain. Of all your child's early experiences, one of the most important is having a **responsive relationship** with a caring adult like you. Look for opportunities to practice a **"serve and return"** responsive interaction with your child, where you take turns responding back and forth. These responsive interactions are the building blocks for a healthy, thriving brain.

1. Notice a **"serve"** from your child that lets you know they want to start an interaction.

A child's "serve" could be a sound, pointing to something, facial expression, or simply eye contact. Tune in to discover what is catching their attention. Did they notice something nearby? Do they need help? Are they curious about something or just in a playful mood?

2. **"Return"** their serve.

Match your response to how your child is feeling. You could talk about what caught their interest, ask a question, imitate their action or sound, give a hug, or simply smile!

3. Invite your child to respond back and wait to see if they do.

Invite them to respond back to you by keeping your attention on what they are doing. Be sure to give your child plenty of time to respond. While you're waiting, their brain is forming new connections to practice the skills needed to participate in back and forth interactions with you.

Try This

- Play peek-a-boo through the Climber windows.
- Take turns putting a ball in the Plinko drop. Can you guess where it will land?
- Copy each other's movements in the mirror.
- Roll a car back and forth and maybe even send it down the ramp!

Explore More at Home

Try interacting together beyond the Discovery Museum. Practice serve and return responsiveness during everyday moments—like mealtimes, diaper changes, and trips outside—and encourage other people in your child's life to do the same.