



# If It Fits

*An idea-packed resource for evidence-based fun!*

## Unlock doorways to new learning with CHILD-FOCUS KEYS!

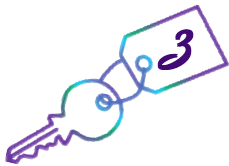
When children with developmental disabilities joyfully participate in everyday activities with adults, they can learn new social and communication skills

Use these six keys to help your child open the door to new skills for talking and playing:

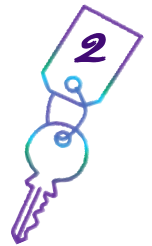


### Give him choices!

Let your child make choices about activities or materials that he wants to use with you.



### Change activities and topics of conversation to keep his interest



After your child has participated in one activity with you for a length of time, ask if he would like to continue in the activity or do something different. By varying the activities or the topics that you converse about, you help maintain his interest and attention in interacting socially with you. The longer he interacts socially, the more opportunities he will have for gaining and practicing new social skills.

## Mix activities he knows how to do well with new ones

Introduce activities that give him opportunities to try something new with those that he has already mastered. This will help him feel confident about his abilities as he takes on new challenges.



### Show him how!

Model the desired skills for him as you interact, such as saying “please” or “thank you” at the appropriate times, using simple phrases for asking questions or making requests, or showing him how to make something work.



### Reward, reward, reward!

Reward him each and every time that he tries to do or say something new, even if he does not do it or say it correctly. For example, if he tries to ask for a drink by saying “dir” instead of “drink,” reward him by giving him the drink.



### Keep it natural

Interacting with and rewarding your child should be done in a way that flows naturally from your interaction with him. Rewards should always be directly related to his behavior. For example, if your child hands you an object in an attempt to show it to you, looking at the object with him and commenting on it would be a more natural way to reward him than it would be to give him a sticker or treat.



## Putting it all TOGETHER!

If your child tries to roll a ball to you and it does not go very far, you can naturally reward his attempt by retrieving the ball and rolling it back to him. Not only will you reward him by rolling it back, but you will also be showing

him how to do it. Once he has mastered the skill of rolling the ball, you can vary the activity by using different types of balls or by throwing it sometimes and rolling it other times, etc. Doing this will maintain his interest in learning to play ball with you while simultaneously reinforcing his existing skill with the ball and providing opportunities to gain new skills with it.

## Bright Ideas



### Child-focus keys at work in the community Example: GROCERY STORE

- Key 1** Give your child a choice in items to buy.
- Key 2** Discuss different types of food, what to have for dinner, and the child's favorite foods.
- Key 3** Mix activities: A mastered task such as handing money to the checkout clerk mixed with a new task such as counting the change that is received.
- Key 4** Say the names of items in the store; say "thank you" to the checkout clerk.
- Key 5** Reward the child for trying to choose items or for trying to converse.
- Key 6** Purchase an item the child indicates that she wants; let her hold or look at something that interests her.



### Child-focus keys at work in home routines Example: CHILD HELPS MAKE LUNCH

- Key 1** Child selects a menu from a choice of foods she likes.
- Key 2** Child engages in different activities such as assembling ingredients, choosing place mats for the table, etc.
- Key 3** Mix activities: A mastered task such as putting food on plates mixed with a new task such as pouring juice in cups.
- Key 4** Thank the child for helping; tell her the names of unfamiliar foods; use adjectives to describe foods.
- Key 5** Reward attempts to set the table, pour juice, etc., even if it isn't done perfectly or if a parent's help is needed.
- Key 6** Let the child choose the drink to have for helping to pour it; tell the child how helpful she is.

Early childhood practices recommended in this issue of *If It Fits* are based on research presented in a practice-based research synthesis by T. L. Humphries (2003). Effectiveness of pivotal response training as a behavioral intervention for young children with autism spectrum disorders. *Bridges*, 2(4). Read or download the complete synthesis and/or a user-friendly, illustrated, two-page research summary, *Bottomlines*, 2(4), by visiting our web site, [www.researchtopractice.info](http://www.researchtopractice.info).

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