

**Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.**

## Top tips: Sustained shared thinking

**Sustained shared thinking encourages the expression and extension of ideas, exploration of concepts, problem-solving and deep learning and is a powerful and meaningful way to help children make sense of the world around them. Here are some tips on how to create in-depth interactions with children where thinking is shared and enhanced:**

- Demonstrate that you value children's ideas and are interested in understanding them
- Give them time to think and process their own thoughts and those of others. Give them time to formulate their thinking into speech
- Use provocations that require hands-on exploration and discussions to encourage group exploration, critical thinking and shared problem-solving, e.g. how can we get the water from A to B and then to C?
- Use children's interests as a starting point for discussions and activities or observe, then sensitively join in with children's activities when you identify an opportune moment to do so, e.g. a group of children trying to build a bridge for trucks to pass over. Encourage them to share the problem, their ideas for solving the problem and what happens when they try out their solutions
- Model your own thought processes by 'thinking out loud' to give children a structure to copy and replicate in other scenarios with other children/adults, e.g. "I'm wondering if I put that piece there what will happen? It might fall over, but I'm going to try it and see"
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage thinking, e.g. "I wonder what would happen if ...?", "How do we ...?"
- Provide open-ended resources that can be used in multiple ways to encourage creative thinking and problem-solving



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- Encourage children to clarify their ideas, make suggestions and offer an alternative viewpoint
- Reflect back what has been said and done and give time for thinking about it
- Be open to unexpected lines of thinking in conversations and let children take the lead, letting them adapt activities based on their ideas
- Take photos and display them to show the evolution of their shared thinking, e.g. collecting natural resources, trying out their ideas through to the final outcome
- Share observations and insights with parents to involve them in their child's learning process. Encourage them to continue discussions at home.

### **NDNA products to support you with these tips**

- [Speech and language skills – online course](#)

**And more resources at [www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna](http://www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna)**