

**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: dummy dilemma - practical tips for practitioners

**A small object that causes a big debate. While some advocate for the use of dummies as soothing tools for babies, others raise concerns about potential dental issues and dependency.**

However, their use is decided upon long before children start at our settings and, as professionals, we need to respect parents' choices and support them by presenting a balanced view, without judgement.

Here are some top tips to help you manage dummy use effectively:

1. Develop a clear policy for dummy use within your setting. This may include limiting usage to designated times and situations when dummies are appropriate, such as during nap time or transitions. Communicate the policy clearly to parents and staff
2. Store dummies in individual hygienic dummy boxes labelled with the child's name to prevent cross-contamination with other children
3. Monitor usage. Keep a track of how often and for how long each child uses their dummy. If you notice excessive use, check to see if there are any triggers for its use other than tiredness
4. Maintain open and honest communication with parents about dummy use and any progress, or indeed challenges, you have observed at nursery. Collaborate with parents to ensure consistency between home and the setting. Work together with parents and offer advice and guidance to gradually reduce dummy reliance. Encourage parents to transition away from dummy use as their child's teeth emerge. Emphasise the importance of regular dental check-ups and oral hygiene
5. Create a nurturing and comforting environment that supports children's emotional needs. Provide cuddles, gentle singing or other soothing activities that can help reduce the need for dummies
6. Model calm and soothing behaviour for children, showing them alternative ways to manage emotions and find comfort without using their dummy
7. Be mindful of your own actions and language surrounding dummy use. Demonstrate positive reinforcement for children who manage to self-soothe without a dummy and provide encouragement to parents who are working towards reducing dependency



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8. Each child is unique, and what works for one child may not work for another. Be flexible and adjust strategies based on the individual needs and preferences of each child.

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

- Online course - [Exemplary practice with two-year-olds](#)
- Publication - [Your essential guide to working with children under three](#)

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