

## Information for parents

### Playdates

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'Playdates' are a method of helping children with VCFS to broaden their circle of friends and learn and practise specific play skills in a systematic manner.

'Playdates' work best if the following guidelines are followed.

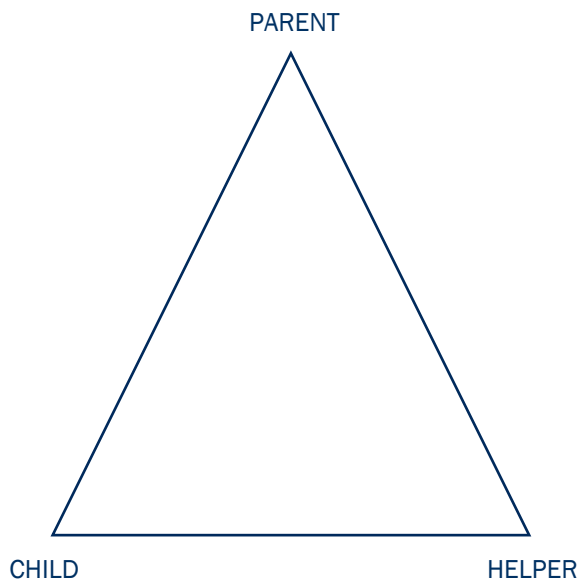
- Get to know your child's teacher, and ask him/her to suggest a child who would be willing to assist by being a playmate. Such a child should ideally be:
  - slightly older or more mature than your child
  - understanding and sympathetic without being 'smothering'
  - a good role model
  - patient
- Arrange to speak to the child's parents and see if they, and the child, are willing to help. This can sometimes be helped if the child is rewarded or recognised for helping.
- When you have organised a willing helper, arrange an afternoon after school, or on the weekend, and invite the helper over to play with your child.
- Choose a familiar and easy game to be played. Dice and board games are excellent choices as they are structured, easy, fun and known to all children. The dice decides the rules, the turns and the order of play etc, not the children and not an adult. This is very important for children who hate to lose or miss a turn or not have the game go their way.
- You play the game with the children, and act as coach and umpire. Help your child to take turns, hand the dice/spinner on to the next person, and play the game according to the rules. Make sure your child is praised for good and fair play. If necessary, physically help your child to take turns and share equipment.
- Keep the game short. Always 'quit whilst you are ahead'. Before the game begins to degenerate, even if only after a short period such as 15 minutes, say: "it is time to finish now." Have the children help put the game material away.
- Always have some kind of ritualised end to the game, for example:
  - have the children shake hands
  - have your child say something like "that was good fun, will you play with me again?"
  - make sure the helper says "yes"
- Sometimes it is useful to build up a 'roster' of helpers in case your main helper cannot come or gets bored, or feels the responsibility is too great.
- Build up a repertoire of games that can be played so that your child extends his interests as well.
- Reward your child for 'good play'.
- Remember, ALWAYS QUIT WHILE YOU ARE AHEAD! Become aware of signs of boredom, frustration etc and wind the game up at that point so that the play date finishes on a positive note.
- Thank the parents of the helper!

### Triangle Play

'Playdates' usually require Triangle Play.

Please see next page for diagram relating to Triangle Play.





In Triangle Play you will feel as though you are in the middle running a puppet show. This is how it is meant to be, and is a good thing. As your child's play skills gradually improve, you will be able to gradually remove yourself from the play situation.

### For more Information

If you require further information please contact:

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