



## 15. Helping your child to learn to play independently

Some children show attention demanding behaviours. They disrupt phone calls or conversations with other people because they want to monopolise you and your time.

These children need to learn how to share you and your time with the rest of the family, to amuse themselves and to play independently without interrupting.

When helping your child to learn to play independently at home:

- Choose a quiet time when other things are not happening and you can concentrate on the child's behaviour. The pre-dinner evening rush is **not** a good time for independent play training.
- You can tell your child:
  - "When I have finished ... [doing this] I will play with you."
  - "That's good playing by yourself."
  - "It's a big help letting me get this done." Etc.
- Let the child know you're not deliberately ignoring them by praising independent, quiet play.
- If your child plays quietly, or just sits quietly while you do something else for 4 minutes, he or she is rewarded by time playing with you. Then there is another period of independent play, and so on. The goal is for your child to be able to play independently without needing you to play too. For some children *shaping* (**See Tip 11 - Teaching Your Child New Skills**) may be needed with independent play initially being for a shorter interval.
- Remember to encourage the child's other desirable behaviours by praising and encouraging cooperative behaviour.
- Gradually increase length of independent play sessions. When your child can play independently for 8-10 minutes, this should cover most home situations.