

Sand Timers

When could I use a sand timer?

- When a child has to move from one activity to the next. For example if a child finds it difficult moving from free play to group time, use a sand timer to show them that you will be expecting them to stop free play and come to group time.
- This can also be used at home if a child is finding it difficult to move on from a favourite activity e.g.. "first TV, then lunch"
- To help children take turns and wait. For example when children need to wait to take their turn on a bike during outside play.
- When you want to try to extend the time that a child stays at an activity.

How should I use a sand timer?

- Make sure the child sees you turn the sand timer over.
- Just before the sand is due to run out encourage the child to watch it. Use simple language to explain e.g. "sand gone; bike finished" or "sand gone, James' turn"
- Make sure you also use the sand timer for the child to wait for motivating activities so that they receive positive feedback from the sand timer and are therefore more likely to respond to it, e.g. when it is their turn to wait for a bike.
- It is likely that you will need to persevere and go through this process with the child several times before they start to respond. Don't give up too soon!

Why should I use a sand timer?

- Many children find the concept of time and waiting difficult to understand and this can be frustrating for children and adults.
- A sand timer is a visual representation of time passing. This is more meaningful to children, than adults trying to explain using language.

Sand timers can be bought from educational catalogues as well as some shops and usually range from 30 seconds to 5 minutes.