

POSITIONS FOR PLAY

What is it?

Good positioning supports and balances the body so the arms and hands can move freely to perform various tasks. This promotes learning as the child is not distracted by maintaining their body position. The child can then focus on the task at hand. Ask your occupational therapist which position is best suited for your child's play needs.

Swaddling

Swaddling is wrapping a baby snugly in a blanket for warmth and security. It can prevent an infant from being startled by their own reflexes, and provide calming opportunities. Ensure that their shoulder/arm and legs are curled inwards. Their hands should be together over their chest. Their head should be supported out of the blanket by the caregiver's arm.

Tummy

Tummy time is important because it promotes head and upper body strength in infants and can be a position for older children to use when doing such activities as colouring or playing with toy cars. For infants, place them on their tummy with their forearms under their chest and parallel with their body. Ensure their legs are straight behind their body, and monitor that your child is pushing up with their arms and not arching their back.

Ways to promote tummy time in infants:

- Place on tummy on floor on blanket → get down on the floor and talk to your child to encourage them to lift their head. After showing the child the toy, slightly lift it above their head and shake it to encourage them to look up. When appropriate, place a toy or shake a toy slightly to the left or right side to encourage them to at first turn their head towards the toy and then eventually pivot their bodies to obtain the toy.
- Lying on parent's chest: Lie on the floor and place your child on your chest. Use methods to encourage them to lift their heads, such as talking to them and to holding a bright toy.

Lying on Back

This position provides the child with the opportunity to observe their environment, and is another method to assist with learning how to bring their hands or toys to the centre of their body and mouth for play.

Ways to promote lying on back:

- Lay on the floor on a blanket: Place your child under a mobile, crouch over the child and talk to them, shake toys or hold toys above their head. Move their arms gently towards their chest or mouth.
- On knees: Sit with your knees bent and feet flat on floor. Place the child on your thighs (on their back) so that they are facing you.
- Cross legged support: Sit on a chair with your one leg bent in the number four shape. Place child on their back in your lap, so that their head is supported on the knee of your bent leg.

Side Lying

This position allows your child to engage with toys with both sides of their body. This helps to promote equal development of each extremity. Ensure that you are turning your child, so that they are able to use both their right and left arm.

Ways to promote side lying:

- Place a rolled towel behind your child's back to prevent rolling backwards
- Ensure the child's head is in line with their body
- Encourage play in this position with toys or getting onto the floor and interacting with the child

Infant Sitting

This position will assist your child with learning to hold their head up, as well as provide them with other opportunities to explore their environment by viewing what is around them and by manipulating objects against gravity. Ensure that the infant's head is in line with their body, as this can make it difficult for them to breathe.

Ways to promote infant sitting:

- Sitting on lap: Place the child on your lap facing outwards. Use your body for support, as well as provide support around their chest
- Against a solid surface: Use rolled up towels/blankets or pillows to provide your child with support at their legs around their arms and around their head. Provide

continued supervision during this activity. Sit in front of your child and speak to them or engage them with a toy.

- Infant seats: Allow your child to observe their environment in a sitting position. A rolled up towel can be used to promote bringing hands to midline. Once your child has gained head control, a bumbo seat can also be used.



Floor Activities

Various positions can be used during floor time activities to allow the child to engage with the activities

- Side Sitting
- 4 point kneeling
- Kneeling
- Half Kneeling
- Standing
- Cross legged: During floor time, encourage the child to sit cross legged.

Discourage “W-sitting” as this position puts stress on the hip joints and lower extremities.



Sitting at Table

Optimal seating at a table/desk is:

- Feet flat on a surface with hips and knees at 90°
- Back supported against the back of a chair
- Arms supported on a table at 2 inches above bent elbows



Ways to Promote Table Sitting:

- Provide footrests when your child’s feet do not touch the floor. Possibilities include:
 - Commercial footrests
 - Phone books bound with duct tape

- Stacked books
- Yoga blocks

Use a table-top easel to elevate the child's work surface and promote an upright sitting position