



## Be Prepared

### Identify the child's interests and what they may want to share

Caregivers can add value to virtual visitations by indicating the child's interests to their virtual partner. They can also prepare performances if the child is musically or theatrically inclined, and ensure toys and books are present to facilitate a more interactive experience.

## Be Present

### Act as the "hands and heart" of the virtual partner

Physical touch is a difficulty that arises with virtual visitation. Caregivers play an important role in alleviating this difficulty by acting as a proxy for physical contact between the child and their virtual partner.

- If the virtual partner "tickles" the child's tummy, caregivers can simulate this by tickling the child's tummy
- If the child and virtual partner are playing "this little piggy", the caregiver can touch the child's feet as part of the game.

Caregivers also play an important role in facilitating eye contact and attention between the child and their virtual partner. Sharing objects is one way in which caregivers can promote shared attention.

- If the virtual partner indicates an object to the child, the caregiver can give verbal cues to help the child locate the object
- Cross-screen sharing can promote shared attention. The child can "share" something, like a snack or toy, with their virtual partner, and the caregiver can assist in simulating the sharing
- Keep in mind that remote visits will require your continued involvement to keep the interactions going, but try to watch for opportunities where you can fade into the background and let the parent engage with their child

## Be Adaptive

### Help the child process video chats

2D media can present difficulties for young children, but video chats are the best way for young children to visit their families virtually. Caregivers play an important role in helping children process video chats.

- Guide the child through technical difficulties. Help them understand confusing concepts such as slow internet, dropped calls, and reconnecting

As babies grow into toddlers and preschoolers, the nature of virtual visitations also changes. Toddlers will be more independent and may want to play with the device. They also may be more resistant to virtual calls at certain times.

- Increase toddlers' involvement in video chats, including letting them press the "call" and "hang up" buttons at the beginning and end of visitations
- If toddlers want to play during visitation, let them! Let their virtual partner talk to them while they do other activities.
- Schedule visits at a consistent time to reduce interruptions and avoid times right before a nap, when a child may be more distracted or irritable

Generally, children ages 9-18 will need less assistance to operate the virtual media, most have an extensive knowledge of technology already.

## **Be Brief**

### **Work within the child's attention span**

If calls linger on too long, the child's attention will start to wane. Try to keep visitation to 15 minutes to give the child the most value from the call.

More short chats per week are better than one long chat.

## **Be Consistent**

### **Frequent visitation helps develop bonding**

Facilitating consistent visitations between the child and their family will help develop bonding.

- Hearing a family member's voice and seeing their face helps with bonding
- Allow older children who are more familiar with virtual devices to have privacy during conversations

## **Additional Resources**

- **[Virtual Visits Recommendations and Resources](#)** by Rose Wentz
- **[Long Distance Activities for Parents](#)** by Rose Wentz