

Blanket Time

Blanket time is an extension of playpen time training. When your child is content in the playpen, you can begin to train him to play on a blanket near you. This is greater freedom because the defined space does not have walls to hold him in. You will begin training him to stay in defined boundaries with your voice. This activity is for infants through early elementary ages. Like playpen time, the child learns to like this activity. Training for blanket time has great rewards beyond your home and will be worth your effort to establish.

To begin training, place a blanket, towel or rug near you on the floor. The size can be about 4' x 4' (120cm) or larger. During the training, you will not be able to really be involved in something else although to the child it looks like you are busy reading a book, magazine, or the newspaper. Really, you are watching them, ready to respond if they move off the blanket. You put a few toys on the



blanket and tell the child he must stay on the blanket. Usually a firm verbal correction will be needed at first to keep the child on the blanket. If your voice does not keep the child on the blanket, further correction may be needed to get the message across to the child if he wants to wander off the blanket. If you keep your training short in the beginning (i. e. 5 minutes), you will not need much correction other than your voice. Do not allow any hands or feet off the blanket. If you are consistent in the beginning, the child will understand his boundaries and you will not need to be present as the gatekeeper continuously.

With consistent use, this activity develops self-control and contentment. Once the child stays on the blanket while you are in the room, the next step is to train him to stay there when you leave the room. During this stage of training, you will stand where you can see him, but he does not see you. Usually your voice command to stay on the blanket the moment he reaches over the boundary with a hand or foot is enough to keep him back on the blanket.

Once trained to stay on the blanket, you can move the blanket to the area you are working (dressing, cleaning, cooking, laundry, etc.) You know where your child is, that he is safe, that he is playing quietly, and that he is not in trouble. When this is established at home, you can use this concept in public. Now you will be rewarded for your efforts in this training. With time, the blanket is not needed for the older child. You can define the boundaries by drawing a line in the sand, identifying landmark boundaries (trees, grassy area, neighbor's driveway, etc.), or simply "on the playground equipment while I visit with your friends' mother."