



Shabbat Guide for Parents

Attention Spans Through the Ages



Top 5 Reasons Online Shabbat Services are Great for Young Kids

- 1) Judaism belongs in your home just as much as it is in the synagogue. When your children see their clergy on your TV screen or laptop it cements the fact that a Jewish identity exists everywhere.
- 2) Even at young ages, the sound of the prayers and melodies from week to week assists in Hebrew learning and, in the long run, will make preparation for a B'nai Mitzvah that much easier.
- 3) Your kids will think that our clergy are famous!
- 4) You can spend the time it would take getting ready (or driving to temple) to engage in hands-on, tangible Shabbat-centering experiences like setting the table for Shabbat dinner or getting Shabbat candles and the kiddush cup ready to participate.
- 5) Parents can find spiritual meaning in the service, without worrying about children's behavior. As parents we often cater to our child's Jewish education, often neglecting our own. Tuning into Shabbat as a family provides a spiritual foundation for all family members, regardless of age and stage.

Attention Spans

NAYCE defines early childhood as birth through 8 years, so at Temple Beth Shalom, we expand our understanding of development to ensure that families with children spanning across ages feel welcome to participate.

0-1 year: Feed your baby during services and recite prayers or sing softly as you follow along with services. Babies don't need to see the screen to get a sense of Shabbat.

1-3 years: Point out the clergy members on the screen, clap and dance along to songs. Recite the blessings for candles, wine/juice, and challah together each week, either during the service, or on your own as a family. By three years old, most children can pay attention until the challah blessing in the service. Even if your child walks away or starts playing quietly, they are still listening and learning the importance of Shabbat.

Preschool: By this age, most children can pay attention to the Barchu. Provide interactive opportunities to engage by having them help set the Shabbat challah, candles, and juice cups on the table. Recite the prayers together. You may be surprised to hear children singing prayers suddenly later in the week as their brains continue to process and comprehend Shabbat!

Kindergarten: Often Friday evenings are full "melt-down" mode for Kindergarteners, as they end a long week of school. Therefore, relaxing together for Shabbat may feel like a stretch. However, incorporate calming ways to watch services together, such as dimming the lights, providing coloring supplies, and snuggling together on the couch. If you can't wait until services to light the candles and eat challah, maybe save dessert to eat together during the service.

1st Grade: By now, most children can sit through until Mi Chamocha, although they may still need some wiggle breaks. Dancing along to Cantor Gostein's songs is not only welcome, it's encouraged!

2nd Grade: Getting through the entire service may be hard each week, however, parents can help children understand the order of the service from week to week, anticipating the S'hma and Kaddish prayer. You can also begin to explain the meaning of each prayer.

3rd Grade: With many children starting Hebrew School, engage them in the prayer book by pointing to Hebrew text throughout the service. Remind them that many of these prayers will be required for their own Bar or Bat Mitzvah! By this age students typically can make it through the musical conclusion to silent prayer, usually a prayer for Peace (Oseh Shalom or Shalom Rav) or Yih'yu L'ratzon, which asks that our prayers of our heart might be acceptable to God.

Adults: Let's face it...many of us find it challenging to resist looking at our iPhone for the entire Shabbat service, so let's why are we so quick to expect children to stay calm, quiet, and engaged during services? Putting your own phone away

models to children the importance of setting a mindful intention for Shabbat. They are paying attention to your behavior just as much as to the clergy's words.

Shabbat Experiences Through the Ages

Here are some fun ideas to engage your child when their attention wanders during services.

- 1) Jewish-themed coloring pages (Find some [printable options](#) here.)
- 2) Shabbat playset--children can recite prayers over their personal Shabbat set (without the fire hazard!) There are a variety of options available online.
- 3) Provide Jewish Books to flip through during the service. (PJ library sends a free monthly book, appropriate for your child's age, directly to your mailbox! [Sign up here.](#))
- 4) In the prayerbook, try to find all the letters of the alef-bet in order within the prayers.
- 5) Take a family walk and reflect on God's creations.
- 6) Shabbat Dinner Conversations- incorporate Shabbat or Jewish content into Friday night dinner conversations. You can discuss how to make your Saturday meaningful or talk about your family's traditions for an upcoming holiday.

For older children--Shabbat Conversation Starters:

- What's one thing that interested you about tonight's service?
- What is a question you have about something in the service?
- What was your favorite melody in the service and what did you like about it?
- What's a prayer you'd like to know the meaning of?
- What is one way you will embrace Shabbat this weekend?
- What would it be like to turn off all technology for one full day every week? What would we miss? What would be energizing about it?
- Let's summarize the Rabbi's D'var Torah in ten words or less.