Tasks: Testing Shifts

1. Data: This is what we’re all here for. We want to do everything we can in the days, weeks, and hours before children come in to participate so that we get the best possible data during the 5 minutes they actually spend in the study. This means:

- If you make a mistake during the study, TELL SOMEONE!
- Make sure all documentation is in order for the study to run
- Make sure everyone involved in running the study is aware of and comfortable with their roles.
- Make sure children who are scheduled meet the criteria for the study.
- Make sure parents and children are relaxed and ready to participate.

2. Parents: The parents absolutely must feel comfortable and appreciated during their visit to our lab. It is because of these parents that we can get the data at all. Treat parents with friendliness, politeness, and respect. Make them feel like they are contributing to our research. Act in a professional manner. This means:

- Tell the parent that their child did a great job on the study after it is over, no matter what. Make it a fun experience for the parent and child. You want to make them feel like their child was great but you never want to pretend that their child behaved according to our predictions, because (1) as experimenters we are blind to the condition in which the child is being run, and (2) because children could perform differently on the same task at different times - one child who does not behave according to our prediction one day could do it the next day.
- Answer parents’ questions and respond to their concerns.
- If a child is crying or the study has to stop for whatever reason, tell the parents that their child did a great job anyway and that we can always use the data we got. They should feel that their visit was helpful and worthwhile. You can tell them that the studies are designed in small parts so that we can stop at any time and still have information we can use.
- If a parent comes early or late, or for whatever reason we are unable to run the child in the study as planned, run the child in a study anyway, even if it is a different study. For instance, if a parent arrives an hour early and you are the only one there, run the child in the study that only takes one person to do, even if the study is for another age group, or would need more people in order for us to be able to use the data. Explain the study to the parent and make them feel useful. You really want them to feel like what they did was useful to us.

3. You: You are not the priority on the shift. You might be afraid that someone will be mad at you if you made a mistake, but if you try to protect yourself by not admitting to it, then you will be sabotaging priority #1, the data. Everyone makes mistakes, but it is important that everyone know so that it can be avoided next time and so the data can be used and we can feel confident about the results that we find.