

7. Why slow matters

Slowing down creates space to notice the small cues, gestures and meanings that are easy to miss in a busy setting.

“ watchful and empathetic pedagogy of attention [...] takes its lead from children and helps them to amplify or modulate their own actions and capacities.”

(MacRae & MacLure, 2021)



Look at the photo.
Think about this
child's movement.



Why slow matters

What the research tells us

Research using innovative methodologies shows how much is missed when the pace is fast and, conversely, how much more can be observed by slowing down.

- In one study of two-year-olds, video footage was slowed down to reveal the often imperceptible and embodied ways very young children move. For example, watching a two-year-old's repeated jumps in slow motion revealed tiny hesitations, knee bends, toe grips, subtle foot repositioning on each landing. Such small movements matter because they demonstrate a sensory form of knowing ⁽¹⁾.
- In another study, dialogues between babies and educators were captured by video and then discussed. It found that educators want to be slow and still with

babies yet feel pressured to 'keep moving' ⁽²⁾. 'Adagio interactions' offers a way of thinking about how to be slow during close interactions with babies. The concept focuses on the qualities of being present, responsive, intentional and at ease ⁽³⁾.

- An adaptation of the Tavistock Observation Method (A-TOM) for use in early childhood settings enabled educators to get to know more about individual children and better understand them. It revealed micro-moments of joy or distress and brought visibility to children who had previously received little attention. It also highlighted subtle peer interactions ⁽⁴⁾.

Find out more:

1. MacRae and MacLure (2021) 2. Guard (2023b) 3. Guard (2025) 4. Elfer (2017)

Download our **Slow Pedagogy Pamphlet** on the Froebel Trust website.



Visual methodologies can help us to see why slowing down matters. They particularly emphasise the value of immersing oneself in interactions with babies and toddlers and being present, responsive and intentional.

