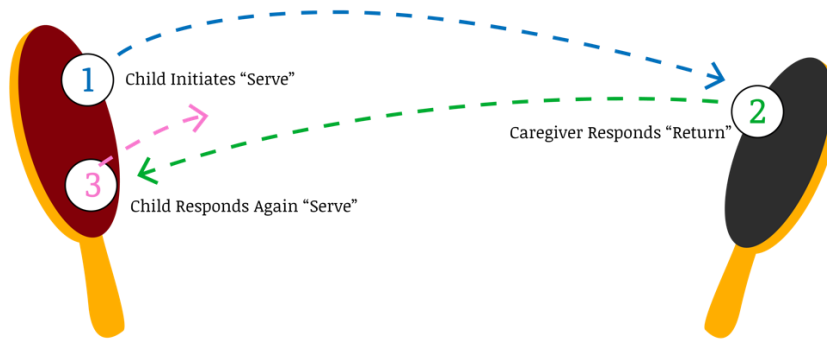


Serve and Return

Read the examples below that show different ways caregivers have responsive interactions with children at various developmental stages. The ping-pong effect, or back-and-forth interaction, is called serve and return (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017).



1. Child Initiates "Serve" →	2. Caregiver Responds "Return" →	3. Child Responds Again "Serve" ←
A 12-week-old infant who has been regularly eating every three hours has become fussier, wanting to eat as often as every hour-and-a-half.	The caregiver understands that it is common for young infants to have "cluster feedings" where they eat more often for a period of time. While this can be demanding, the caregiver responds to the infant's needs and feeds on demand.	The child's fussiness lessens and the caregiver notices the child is beginning to engage in more quiet alert time.
A 16-month-old tugs at your shirt with arms up in the air while grunting.	Caregiver warmly looks at the child and says, "You want me to hold you? I'm going to finish washing my hands, and then I will pick you up."	The child patiently waits till the caregiver picks them up. Letting the child know their request will be met, supports the child's development of self-regulation.
When preparing to go outside, a caregiver observes a 4-year-old child become visibly frustrated while struggling to independently put on a coat.	The caregiver approaches the child on their level and responds, "I see that you are frustrated because it is hard to put your coat on. Is there something I can do?"	The child says, "help me" and gladly accepts assistance. Modeling words that describe the child's feelings, "frustrated", gives language to the emotion. Using an open-ended question supported the child in problem-solving the situation.
A 9-year-old who is normally disinterested in your program's activities listens and asks questions when you are explaining a potholder weaving activity.	You excitedly acknowledge the child's interest and use this opportunity to engage. "Thank you for asking those great questions; would you like to make a potholder?"	The child participates in the activity and shares with you that, "Grammy weaves fleece blankets at home." This provided an opportunity to learn about an important relationship in the child's life.