Hairbrushing: Parent Carer Checklist & Strategies

Use this checklist to think about what might be making it difficult for your child, then try some of the suggested strategies.

Challenge	**Strategies to try**
My child gets bored during hairbrushing	• Use a timer or favourite song to make it a short, predictable activity. • Offer a toy, fidget, or video to hold their attention. • Break the task into short bursts with praise or rewards in between.
My child struggles to sit still for long	• Brush hair in stages (e.g. morning and evening instead of all at once). • Try brushing while your child is engaged in another activity (watching TV, looking at a book, sitting on a wobble cushion). • Let them stand up instead of sitting if that feels easier.
My child does not like the feel of the bristles on their scalp	Experiment with different brushes (softer bristles, wide-tooth comb, detangling brush, or silicone scalp brush). • Let your child choose their own brush to give them control. • Start by brushing a doll's or parent's hair to build familiarity before moving to their own. • Use gentle, slow strokes and check in often.
My child has very knotty hair and dislikes knots being pulled	Use conditioner or detangling spray to reduce tangles. • Brush from the bottom up, holding the hair above the knot to reduce pulling on the scalp. • Try wide-tooth combs or brushes designed for detangling. • Keep hair tied back in plaits/braids to reduce knots forming.
My child feels anxious about hairbrushing	• Use visual supports (e.g. pictures or a step-by-step chart) so they know what will happen. • Create a predictable routine (same time, same place, same brush). • Offer choices (which brush, sitting or standing, who brushes). • Praise and reward small successes, even if it's just letting the brush touch their hair. • Pair brushing with calming input (deep breaths, weighted lap pad, soft music).