



# Play and Language

## Why is play important for learning?

Play is the true work of a child. When children are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, climbing, running, and role playing, they are learning.

Through play, children learn many skills, such as how to interact with others, solve problems and accept different ways of thinking. While playing children learn:

- large muscle skills – e.g., running, climbing, pulling, pushing
- small muscle skills – e.g., drawing, painting, catching
- social skills – e.g., turn taking, sharing, cooperating, initiating
- emotional skills – e.g., showing feelings, caring
- language skills – e.g., listening, talking, asking using words, rhyming, singing, telling stories
- thinking skills – e.g., exploring, planning, matching, problem-solving



Adapted from : Learning to Play and Playing to Learn: What Families Can Do

## Playing and babies

Babies are social and love to interact with others. Play is a way to explore their senses, practice making sounds and work on social skills (such as taking turns).

### Encourage language by:

- Being face to face
- Talking about what you are doing, don't forget to use all 5 senses (feels, tastes, smells, sounds like)
- Naming body parts as you wash them or get dressed
- Practicing taking turns by playing games like peek-a-boo
- Singing songs and doing nursery rhymes
- Talking about what your baby is interested in

## How will my baby play with friends?

**2 months** - shows signs of being interested in other babies

**9 months** – sits side-by-side and does parallel play (play beside and not with each other)

**12 months** – pushes and pulls toys towards and away from each other



# Playing with Toddlers

Toddlers like to explore and are starting to pretend play.

## Encourage language by:

- Letting your child know that you are interested in what they are doing by talking about it
- Getting down at the same level as your child (it may be harder now that they are busier)
- Getting your own toys and talking about what you are doing (this gives your child ideas of words they could use)
- Modeling how to use your imagination: use a blanket as a cape or to make a fort
- Being silly

## Did You Know?

The American Academy Of Pediatrics states that passive video presentations do not lead to language learning in infants and young toddlers.



## How will my toddler play with friends?

- 12 months – pushes and pulls toys towards and away from each other
- 18 months – hand toys to each other, stomp around together; some children are very social and will play with anyone while others prefer to sit back and watch
- 2 years – takes turns, begins cooperative play by telling each other what they want to do; takes on different roles (e.g. one will be chased and the other the chaser)

## Playing With Preschoolers

Playing at this age is all about using their imagination and figuring out how to play with others.



## How will my child play with friends?

Play is interactive; plays 'pretend' with their friends; starts to make friends with certain peers.

## Encourage language by:

- Helping your child solve problems as they play. Give them hints or explain why things aren't working (puzzles, building with blocks, etc..)
- Encouraging pretend play: pretend to do things that you do every day (like eating breakfast), activities that are less frequent (visiting the doctor, taking a trip, visiting a park) and things you haven't done yet (going to the zoo, being an Astronaut)
- Showing your child how take turns when playing games

# Basic Toys and How to Play as Your Child Grows

Basic toys are toys that can be played with in a variety of ways. Because you can do many things with basic toys, they let your child to use their imagination when playing with them.

Many basic toys can grow with your child too. Here are examples of basic toys and how they grow with your child:

	6 months	12 months	18 months	2 years	3 years
<b>Ball</b>	looks, grasps, feels	rolls to you, maybe throws	throws overhand to you	kicks ball to you	catches, kicks into a net
<b>Wooden Blocks</b>	chews, hits, holds	bangs two blocks together, knocks over blocks	stacks 2 or 3 blocks	makes a tower, sorts by color, pretends it is a car or boat	builds forts, bridges, tunnels
<b>Crayons</b>	*too young for crayons	holds crayon and scribbles	imitates you drawing	doodles on their own	copies a circle, cross, square, draws a person with 1 or more body parts
<b>Stuffed Animal</b>	explores by feeling and chewing	carries it around	makes sounds that match the toy e.g. meow	basic pretend play like "feeding"	complex pretend play like teddy becomes a dinosaur and hunts for food
<b>Simple Puzzle</b>	Holds puzzle pieces and chews them	dumps out the pieces, takes pieces out by holding knobs	puts large pieces in with your help	puts pieces into holes, puts together a 3- piece puzzle	puts together a basic 8-piece puzzle
<b>Toy Instrument</b>	pats a drum to explore it	bangs on drums, pots, pans	claps to music, hits two sticks together, shakes a tambourine	presses the piano keys, beats a drum, strums a guitar	blows into a harmonica

## Electronic toys

Beware of toys with too many bells and whistles, they don't encourage imagination. The captivating flashing lights and catchy sounds change how children play and change how we interact with them.

Studies have shown that during the time kids are watching a screen (iPad, TV, phones) or playing on an electronic toy, they are not interacting and learning as much as they could with other types of toys.

For updated media guidelines check out the American Academy of Pediatric.

