

Pretend Play

PLAY
IDEAS 7

ABOUT
PRETEND
PLAY



Children pretend in many different ways by dressing up, role playing, making a cubby, having a tea party or playing with a farm set. Role playing helps children learn about social roles and rules and they can practise doing things, which might be scary or difficult, in a safe environment. Pretend play also develops language skills and an ability to plan ahead, problem solve and think creatively.



PRETEND PLAY AND DEVELOPMENT



Babies

Before children can play imaginatively they need to learn about objects and their functions. Babies need to spend time exploring objects by mouthing, banging, waving and shaking. Around 12-15 months babies begin to imitate what you do. This first pretend play is brief and isolated.



Toddlers

Toddlers love to copy what you do by pretending in simple ways such as pretending to drink from a cup, feed a teddy or talk on a telephone. Give them toys so they can help clean, wash, sweep, cook, garden and fix - just like Mum or Dad. Pretend play is fun for toddlers.



Young Children

Around 3 years pretend play becomes more involved. "Mealtime" is now setting the table, cooking, serving, eating and washing up. They may show a book to a doll or ask teddy if he "wants more". They can substitute objects such as a block for a car or a hat for a boat. In preschool years you see the most pretend play. Children can take on several roles at once (eg. mother, father, baby) and play out ideas they have seen on TV like space travel. Stories can be very detailed and full of fantasy.



P.A.L. PLAY AND LEARNING PROGRAM
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WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Show 1 year olds how to pretend: kiss, cuddle or feed dolly and teddy, talk on the pretend phone, push the truck and make truck noises, play with toy animals, make animal noises and sing action songs.
- Explore themes such as the shopping, buying fast food, going to the office, the doctor's surgery, riding on a bus or train, going camping and going to kindy. Pretend play can be indoors or outdoors.
- Include props for imaginary play such as dolls, teddies, farm sets, doctor sets, train sets, cars/ trucks, play mats, pots/pans/stove or dress-ups.
- Around 3 years begin introducing elements of object substitution. This is where you can use a box as dolly's bath or bed or a spoon as a wand. Put some "junk" objects in with your other toys- boxes, tea towels, cylinders, straws, rope. Show your child how to pretend.
- Encourage your child to explore all types of play - boys may like to be "Mum" and girls may like to be "Dad" and girls can be truck drivers and boys can be ballet dancers.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Supervise children closely if using scissors/glue/paint/staplers etc. when making props and costumes. Be aware of choking hazards and toxic materials.
- Dress ups are often loose and flowing. When wearing dress-ups special care needs to be taken around stairs, climbing equipment, open fires or heaters.

SOME ACTIVITIES TO TRY

- **Have a "tea party"** with dolly and teddy. Pour cups of "tea" and show how to give teddy a drink and see if your child will imitate. Ask your child to pour you a cup of tea, then pretend the tea is hot, and blow to cool it down.
- **Model play sequences** As your child develops, try putting a few play actions together: eg. pour the tea, add the milk, drink the tea and wash the cup. Increase the complexity of play as your child shows you they are ready by joining in, imitating and putting more play actions together. Follow your child's lead.
- **Sand and water play** You can make caves for animals or people using plastic containers, have a swimming hole, use cars and trucks and make roads. Make up a story about the scene. You start the story then have your child say what happens next. Take turns telling the story.
- **Dressing up** Make hats from ice-cream containers, shoes from tissue boxes, robes from old sheets or an elephant trunk from old pantyhose. Children will like parading around in your old clothes, shawls, hats and shoes. An old suitcase can be used to store the dress ups.
- **Make and play with puppets** They can be made simply from paper bags, socks, wooden spoons, stockings, cardboard tubes, gloves, cardboard or paper mache. A large box with a window cut for a stage can serve as a puppet theatre.
- **Play with boxes** Boxes can be turned into cars, planes, trains, rockets, seats on a bus, castles and stoves. They don't need to be elaborate, simply draw on or cut out a few features such as doors/windows. Older children will enjoy the making and decorating.

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