



Play and Learning 8

Pretend play

Pretend play develops language skills and the ability to problem solve and think creatively.

- Role playing helps children learn about **social roles and rules**. It also provides a safe environment where they can **practise doing things** which might be scary or difficult.
- **Children pretend in many different ways** – dressing up, role playing, making a cubby, having a tea party or playing with a farm set.

When it comes to pretend play:

- **babies** need to spend time exploring objects by mouthing, banging, waving and shaking.
- **toddlers** love to pretend and copy you doing everyday activities. Give them pretend 'tools' so they can 'help you' clean, wash, sweep, cook, garden or fix.
- **young children** become more involved with their pretend play. They may enjoy creating a meal – setting the table, cooking, serving, eating and washing up.

What can you do

- **Explore** everyday themes such as the shopping, going to the doctors, riding on a bus or train, going camping, going to school or being 'all grown up' and doing tasks around the house just like mum or dad. Pretend play can be indoors or outdoors.
- Include their favourite soft toy, baby doll or figurines in everyday play and routines.
- Encourage your child to **explore all types of play** – boys may like to be 'Mum' and girls may like to be 'Dad', girls can be truck drivers and boys can be ballet dancers.

Some activities to try

- Things like farm sets, play mats, dress ups and cooking sets can help with pretend play.
- **Have a pretend party or picnic** with dolly and teddy – show how to give teddy a drink and see if your child will imitate (use cold water). Ask your child to pour you a drink in a cup, and then pretend it is too hot and blow to cool it down.
- Make up a story then have your child say what happens next. Take turns telling the story.
Model play sequences by putting a few actions together – 'We're going for a drive in the car. Where should we go? Remember to put petrol in.'



Follow your child's lead to see what is interesting to them. Allow time for repetition and then add more detail to your pretend play story as your child starts joining in, imitating, and putting more play actions together.



Some activities to try (continued)

- **Sand and water play** – build sand caves for toy animals or people using plastic containers, dig a swimming hole, or use cars and trucks to make roads.

- **Dress-ups** – create hats from ice-cream containers, shoes from tissue boxes, robes from old sheets or an elephant trunk from old stockings.

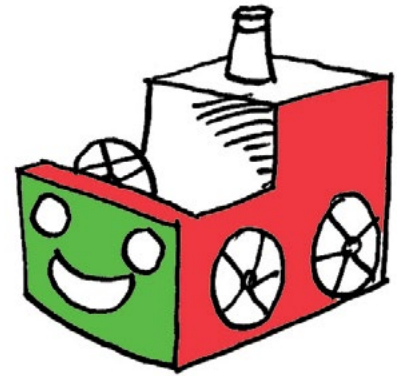
Children will like parading around in your old clothes, shawls, hats and shoes.

- **Make and play with puppets** – using paper bags, socks, wooden spoons, stockings, cardboard tubes, gloves, cardboard or paper mache.

A large box with a window cut out for a stage makes a great puppet theatre.

- **Play with boxes** – boxes can be cars, planes, trains, rockets, seats on a bus, castles and stoves.

They don't need to be fancy – just draw on or cut out doors, windows, wheels or hot plates. Older children will enjoy the making and decorating.



Keeping your child safe

- Supervise your child closely at all times especially around water, play equipment, or when using objects such as scissors, pencils, glue or paint. Avoid flammable or toxic materials.
- Babies, toddlers and young children can choke on small toys and objects. Regularly check toys to make sure they are safe and in good condition.
 - Toys should be bigger than a 20 cent coin.
 - Strings on toys should be less than 20 centimetres long.
- Do a safety check and make sure your home is safe for your child to actively explore.
- **Be SunSmart** – make sure your child has adequate sun protection when playing outdoors.

Find out more

For more information on play, learning, and a range of other topics, visit:

- playgroupwa.com.au
- raisingchildren.net.au
- bringingupgreatkids.org
- cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childhealthresources

For more information about the metropolitan **Child Development Service** phone 1300 551 827 or visit cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childdevelopment

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