

- Sets of animals, toy people and cars
- Old clothes for dress up
- Toys to ride on or pedal

■ Can media be used as effective play?

- Children are continually exposed to media and digital devices such as television, computers, smartphones and iPads.
- While some of these tools are marketed as educational play when used appropriately, there is a lack of parent-child interaction and social-emotional development that comes with real world play.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages the use of media in children younger than 2 years.
- Once your child is older, do supervise him/her when using or watching media devices and set a time limit.
- A reasonable time limit would be one hour every day.
- After every session, extend your child's learning through interactive discussion and pretend play.
- This will help him/her to use these experiences with media to make sense of the real world.
- Increased outdoor play versus computer use and book work has been shown to reduce myopia in children.

■ Toy safety

- Check that the toy is of sound quality or has a Safety Mark (eg. CE) or Lion Mark.
- Make sure that the age range of the toy is suitable for the child's age.
- Check for loose parts, small detachable parts, or sharp edges.
- Any cords or ribbons should be less than 15cm to prevent accidental strangulation.
- Avoid giving young children balloons, small balls, marbles or magnets.
- Check toys regularly for wear and tear. Discard if broken.
- Keep batteries locked away. Toys should ideally have a screwed-on battery compartment.
- Follow the instructions and warnings provided with the toy.

- Supervise very young children during play at all times.
- Tidy up after playing to prevent tripping.
- Ensure that playground equipment is robust and stable and keep continuous supervision on young children using them.
- Ensure that children use the appropriate safety gear when on a bicycle, skateboard or rollerblades.

■ Things to note

- Play with your child but do not take over, let your child change the game.
- Talk about what your child is doing and encourage him/her (eg. "It looks like Dolly is going shopping. What does she want to buy?").
- Appreciate and encourage your child's efforts (eg. display art works on the wall or fridge).
- Always ensure the game is safe, especially if using small toys or objects that can easily be put in the mouth.
- Play is about focusing on the process, not the end product.
- Have fun teaching, learning from, and bonding with your child!

This brochure is developed by the Department of Child Development.



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Playing With Your Child



Children need to play, and not just alone or with their peers. In order to achieve their full developmental potential, an essential part of play for young children is to play with their parents and siblings.

■ Why is play important?

- It helps your child to develop cognitive, motor, language and social skills in a fun and enjoyable manner.
- It allows your child to explore and interact with the world around him/her. Your child will learn how to manage his/her feelings in relation to others and about the function and properties of daily objects.
- It provides an ideal opportunity for you to bond with your child.

■ How can you play with your child?

Play ideas for babies (3 to 6 months)

Babies first learn to recognise your voice, face and touch, and associate them with comfort. They then explore through grabbing and putting things in their mouths.

- Cuddle and squeeze your baby, use a changing tone of voice and varying facial expressions.
- Play tickling games and blow raspberries on your baby's tummy.
- Dance to music with your baby in your arms.
- Stimulate your baby with toys that are colourful and make noise (eg. using rattles).

Play ideas for older infants (7 to 12 months)

At this stage, children start to learn about who they are and to experiment being separate from their carers. They need lots of things to touch, but also to be able to move around and explore safely. They also learn to imitate you and to try to communicate.

- Play 'peek-a-boo' games. Use your hands or a small cloth in front of your face or go behind your child's back.
- Pretend to talk on a toy telephone and pass it back and forth. Let your child babble to you.

- Play clapping games (eg. 'Pat-a-cake').
- Play in front of a large mirror. (eg. kissing, patting, making faces.)
- Wear hats and sunglasses and encourage your child to explore your face.

Play ideas for toddlers (1 to 2 years)

As they start to move independently, toddlers need to practise motor skills such as pushing and pulling and developing hand-eye coordination. As they start to talk, they need opportunities to practise language. Their attention span is short and they need lots of changes of activity. Their world is also widening and they like to go on small outings.

- Blow bubbles for your child to burst.
- Use a bucket and shovel (or large spoon) to scoop up water or sand.
- Scribble on paper using washable crayons or coloured pencils.
- Sing along to nursery rhymes and make up actions for your child to imitate (eg. Twinkle Twinkle, Head Shoulders Knees and Toes).
- Pretend to cook and share a meal with a toy cooking set or tea set.
- Go for a walk in the park. Listen to different sounds (eg. birds, cars, footsteps). Find different surfaces to walk on, maybe even barefoot (eg. grass, sand, concrete pavement and leaves).
- Jump on each other's shadows.
- Collect interesting objects in a wagon and get your child to push or pull it.
- Play outdoors on a swing and seesaw, throw, kick and catch a ball together.

Play ideas for pre-schoolers (2 to 5 years)

Preschoolers are beginning to learn to share and take turns, and they like imaginative and pretend play. They also like activities which let them move about freely (eg. running, climbing and riding pedal toys).

- Paint using interesting textures such as sponges and toothbrushes or try finger or foot-printing.
- Have a baking session and let your child knead dough, cut cookies and decorate cupcakes.

- Lie on a large sheet of paper and draw around your outlines, then draw in face and body details.
- Model objects and figures with clay or 'Play-Doh'.
- Tell stories using hand puppets.
- Construct a homemade telephone with two plastic cups and a string.
- Pretend that an object is something else (eg. use remote controls or bananas as a telephone).
- Create more complex pretend play (eg. have a teddy bear tea-party, pretend to go on a bus ride on the sofa or pretend to go on a trip to the market and do 'shopping').
- Use dolls, action figures, farm animals, dinosaurs or cars to create a storyline or sequence of events.
- Play dress up (eg. doctor, teacher, policeman).
- Put items into a 'feely' bag and guess what is in the bag by touch.
- Play simple card games like "Snap" or memory games, or Junior Monopoly (to count money) and Junior Scrabble (to learn spelling).
- Introduce sports games using miniature basketballs and hoops or soft soccer balls and try hopscotch.
- Play hide-and-seek.
- 4 to 5 year olds should be able to (and probably prefer to) play between themselves.

■ What kinds of toys should you buy for your child?

Parents often feel that they need to buy young children lots of toys. However, many toys that are bought for children may not allow them to use their own imagination and create their own games. This can lead to children playing with them for a while and then wanting more.

A few toys and resources that allow your child to be creative and that can be rotated from time to time are likely to be of more value to him/her than large numbers of expensive toys.

Examples of valuable 'toys' for your child

- Wooden blocks
- Pots and pans and cooking sets
- Boxes of all sizes and shapes
- Large sheets of paper and washable crayons or watercolours