# Object Substitution

## What is Object Substitution?

Object Substitution occurs when the child uses one object and pretends it is something else. Object Substitution allows children to explore play in creative ways, develop problem-solving skills and promote flexible thinking.

## What can you use for Object Substitution?



**Household items**
(e.g. toilet rolls, cardboard boxes, bottles, sticks)



**Open-ended toys**
(e.g. blocks, Lego, magnetic tiles, play dough)

## What can I do to help?



**Have play activities with missing items**
(e.g. cut fruits without a knife)



**Make it more concrete**
(e.g. add details to resemble the actual object)



**Show your child how to substitute objects in play**

# What are the different types of Object Substitution?

**18 months**

**Uses object functionally**

Using objects like they are intended for
(e.g. pretends to drink, feeds a doll)

**Uses similar looking objects**

**20 months**

Using objects that are physically similar
(e.g. pretends banana is a phone,
makes fish and chips out of blocks)

**2 years**

**Turns 1 object into 2 objects**

Using the same object for 2 different functions
(e.g. pretends that blocks are cars and people,
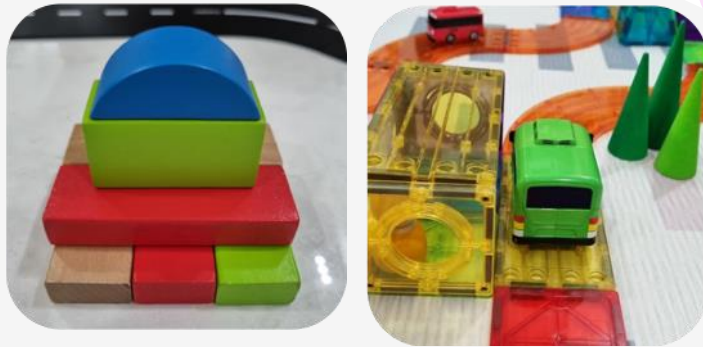uses toilet roll as binoculars and tunnel)

## 2.5 years

### Turns 1 object into many objects



Using the same object for 3 or more functions
(e.g. pretends that a box is a bath,
a bed and a boat for teddy)

### Uses many objects to create new objects

## 3 years



Uses objects fluently in play and even builds own play objects
(e.g. builds a house out of blocks,
builds a bus stop out of magnetic tiles)

## 3.5 years

### Uses body parts or imaginary objects in play

Uses body parts or actions to represent an object
that is not physically present
(e.g. pays with imaginary money,
uses a finger as a gantry)



### Uses distinct objects for substitution

## 4 - 5 years



Uses any objects that is not physically or functionally
similar to the real object, and makes up a use of it

Uses actions or language to describe what it is
(e.g. shoe is a rocket)