

Surrey Early Speech and Language Program

The Power of Play

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How can we encourage children to learn about their world, practice their motor skills, learn to communicate, make social connections, take turns, and problem-solve without even knowing they are practicing these skills? Easy! Play, play, and more play!

Play is an incredibly crucial part of development, and the best part is, children learn through play because it is so much fun! Even children with limited communication skills respond to and enjoy playing. Play offers the opportunity for tons of repetition, which reinforces the skills a child is learning. Just like in the development of speech and language, and motor skills, play typically develops in a set sequence. The development of play runs parallel to the development of movement, language and cognition.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PLAY

- Follow your child's lead; play according to your child's interests and level
- Be flexible (there is no "right" answer).
- Redirect child's attention or remove the toy if play is destructive
- Allow your child to be creative

The most important thing to remember is to **HAVE FUN!!!**

DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY AND AGE-SPECIFIC TOY IDEAS:



0-6 months - Movement goes from being reflexive to more deliberate (Ex. grasping, transferring objects from hand to hand). Infants can usually only focus on one thing at a time. (Toys: rattle, cloth toys, soft dolls, stuffed animals, activity quilts, large interlocking rings or keys)



6-9 months - Infant moves from sensory experience to goal-oriented experience, can grasp items in a variety of ways, sitting, crawling, pulling to stand, start to clap/bang toys, start of early social interaction with other babies. (Toys: simple musical instruments, push-pull toys, squeeze/squeak toys, bath toys, balls)



9-12 months- Increased spatial awareness, knows something still exists even if it is not immediately visible or in the room (object permanence), enjoys "peekaboo" games, puts things in containers, begins to stack things up and then knock them down, begins to imitate simple motor activities. (Toys: soft blocks, pop-up toys, cloth and cardboard picture books with single word/picture per page)



12-18 months - Like to have things they can manipulate; puts several objects into container, imitates, stacks in a controlled manner, can discriminate shapes, early problem-solving (Toys: nesting and stacking toys, ball, bubbles, hammer and balls toy, puzzles with knobs)



18-24 months - Still likes things they can manipulate, likes things that have a cause and effect, increased problem-solving and use of tools, symbolic use of objects (e.g. pretends to drink from stacking cup), matches objects to their location or function (Toys: ride-on toys, wagons, infant swing, small slide, small climbing apparatus, sandbox/sand toys, water toys)



24-30 months - Starts to do simple symbolic play, dress-up play, playing with dolls, can turn pages of a book singly, draws circles, understanding and use of the word "circle." (Toys: dolls and baby gear, play vehicles, large crayons and coloring books, clay, finger paints, cardboard picture books, pop-up books)



3 years - Starts to extend symbolism to pretend play, language-guided problem-solving, use of language in pretend play, throws a ball overhand, draws in several directions, sequences 3 objects or words, begin to play actively with other children (Toys: blocks with letters and numbers, hand and finger puppets, kitchen equipment and gadgets, play household items, dolls that can be bathed, fed and diapered, play cars with garage, lift the flap books)



4 years - Likes toys with more pieces and more turns, likes toys with current themes (Ex Spiderman, Dora etc.), adding detail to drawings, counts to three, understands concepts such as light/heavy, wet/dry, sink/float, skips, balances on one foot, traces shapes, can manipulate scissors (Toys: magnet games, simple board games, play scenes with figures and accessories, art supplies, Playmobile, Lego, "Look-and-Find" books)



5 years - Spontaneous play moves into the real world, (e.g. helping wash the car, bake cookies), team activities, sports, play is bound by shared rules (e.g. tag, ball games, board games, card games), play has many steps and more complexity, hops on one foot, mature skipping, tracing more detailed shapes (such as letters), draws people (Toys: props for make-believe play, backyard gym equipment, toys with gears/movable parts)