

BABY BYTES

For families with infants and young children

Pretend Play

Have you ever seen your child pick up a box and put it on their head as a 'hat'? Have you watched as a set of pots and pans became a drum set? Pretend play is what children do to learn about their world and to understand how to interact with the people and things that are in it. Children learn from copying actions of their parents and other people around them. Pretend play develops a child's expressive, imaginative, social and language skills and is a vital part of their development. And the best part of all... its fun!



DID YOU KNOW???

- Pretend play helps to build confidence, abstract thinking and new vocabulary.
- 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.
- Toddlers love to copy what you do by pretending in simple ways. They pretend to drink from a cup, feed a doll or talk on the phone. They will love to imitate Mom or Dad by washing, sweeping and pretending to cook.
- When your child feeds a doll, pretends to talk on the phone and interacts with stuffed animals, he is developing verbal and social skills. Dolls and soft toys are usually one of the first props that children use in their pretend play. Children are born to be naturally nurturing and will cuddle teddies and carry dolls as if they are real babies. Pretend play



helps children practice future roles.

You can Support and Encourage your Preschooler's Play Opportunities

- Keep a box of everyday items that your child can use: toy telephones, plastic dishes, hats, scarves.
- Provide a space that allows for freedom and mess
- Have a 'tea party' with your child's dolls and stuffed animals.
- Show your child how to play with toy animals, make animal sounds, talk on pretend phones, cuddle dolls.
- Make puppets out of paper bags, socks and wooden spoons. Involve your puppets in play or when reading stories.

Best Pretend-Play Props

Consider adding some of these items to your child's play area:

- Containers and boxes of various shapes and sizes
- Dress-up clothes, shoes, hats, bags, and backpacks
- Old telephones, cooking utensils, dishes, plastic food containers
- Puppets, stuffed animals, baby dolls, bottles, blankets, and diapers
- Blankets, fabric pieces or old sheets for making a fort



How Can You Help Expand Your Child's Play?

- Talk about what's happening as your child plays
- Read books together using plenty of expressions
- Begin with realistic props and follow your child's lead
- Join in and do some pretending of your own
- Talk to your children as if you were talking to their "character"
- Ask questions to prompt conversation and actions: 'Is your baby hungry? What do you think the baby needs?'

"When children pretend, they're using their imaginations to move beyond the bounds of reality. A stick can be a magic wand. A sock can be a puppet. A small child can be a superhero."

~ Fred Rogers American children's television host 1928-2003