

# The importance of play

Play is key to children's learning and all aspects of their development.



During play, children learn to make choices and to express their preferences and needs. This builds their awareness of themselves, others and the world around them.

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Try to spend at least 15 minutes a day with your child just focusing on play and following these tips:

- Remove any distractions. Turn off the TV/radio and put away your mobile phone or any iPads and tablets.
- Get down to the child's level. Try to be face-to-face, opposite and close together.
- Follow the child's lead. Let them choose the toys and decide what they want to do with them.
- Comment but don't question. This feels very unnatural but is extremely important. Try making 4 comments for every question you ask.
- Model simple words and phrases. Don't correct the child or ask them to repeat what you have said.
- Repeat and extend what your child says. For example:  
car → big car!  
girl → yes girl, that's Emma.

# More information

## Language develops alongside play

Type of Play	Examples	Level of language
<u>Recognition of objects</u>	Knows the use of an object - picks up a cup to drink or uses a brush.	Starting to use noises to communicate that don't yet sound like words.
<u>Self pretend</u>	Picks up a cup and pretends to drink from it.	Single words.
<u>Differentiated pretend</u>	Pretends to give teddy a drink.	Extending vocabulary.
<u>Pretend combinations</u>	Gives the doll a drink and then puts her to bed.	Starting to join words together e.g. dolly drink, dolly sleep.
<u>Planning</u>	Playing games with basic rules and creating fantasy scenarios.	May be using more complex and longer sentences.

Play doesn't need expensive toys. Pots and pans, a blanket for 'peek-a-boo' and a bowl with water or rice are perfect tools for play and language development.

Think how often a child prefers to play with the box than the toy that came in it!

