



Chat

Play Stages

Types of Play	Description	Examples	How to Help Your Child
Exploratory Play	Children play with toys by exploring with their senses, such as touching, mouthing, visually examining, smelling, banging, throwing, and dropping the toy or object.	- Putting their hands and feet in their mouth - Throwing cars or toys - Dropping crayons on the ground - Crinkling paper - Looking at objects in their hands - Squishing food in their hands	- Giving them food with various textures - Encouraging exploration of food with hands - Asking questions and making comments (e.g., "big truck!" "Yummy yogurt") - Commenting on any gestures they make towards the item (e.g., "shake, shake!")
Combinational Play	Children combine toys together by nesting one object in another, putting objects in containers, lining, stacking, or putting toys in order in certain ways.	- Putting small items in a toy dump truck - Using bristle blocks - Putting shapes in a shape sorter - Putting objects in a basket - Linking up toy cars or trains together	- Making comments about what they're doing (e.g., "star goes in!" "red car, bike car, yellow car") - Playing with them and showing them new ways of playing (e.g., stacking bristle blocks differently, putting cars in a line upside down) - Collecting leaves or items from outside in a basket. Point out items they can collect, and help them put things in the basket.
Cause and Effect	Cause and effect play teaches children that their actions can cause something to happen	- Pop-up toys such as a jack-in-the-box - Toys that have switches and buttons that trigger lights and sounds - Hitting their cup on the table to hear the noise it makes	- Encouraging playing with toys that make noise or movement when an action is taken - Playing with flashlights when it gets dark - Allowing your child to play with items in the house that are not considered toys such as a wooden spoon and a pot - Having them touch your nose and make a silly sound, like honking or a doorbell sound

Functional Play	Children use common toys or objects appropriately.	• Pushing toys cars • Putting toys and toys in cars • Throwing and rolling balls • Kicking a ball • Talking on a toy phone • Pushing a toy stroller or shopping cart • Stacking blocks	• Engaging in play with them, copying their play or showing them how a toy can be used • When introducing new toys or objects, demonstrating it first then handing it to your child
Self-Directed Play	Children direct some basic pretend play action towards themselves.	• Pretending to eat • Pretending to sleep • Pretending to talk on a play phone	• Engaging with them by copying what they're doing • Letting them direct you how they want to play • Letting them pretend to be a doctor, dress you up, pretend to put you to bed
Other Directed Pretend	Children direct basic pretend play towards another person or other toys	• Pretending to feed a doll • Pretending to dress a doll • Pretending to put a stuffed animal to sleep • Pretending to put you to sleep	• Engaging with them by copying what they're doing • Letting them pretend to be a doctor, dress you up, pretend to put you to bed
Pretend Play (also called Symbolic Play)	Children to use objects, actions, or ideas to represent other objects, actions, or ideas as play	• Stacking blocks to make a building • Opening an imaginary door • Using a block as a phone • Turning a cardboard box into a castle, rocket ship, or race car	• Adding new items into their play (e.g., lantern, pillow, household objects). • Suggesting ways they can incorporate new items into their play (e.g., "what if we use this spoon as a wand?") • Giving them an empty box or cereal boxes to play with
Complex Pretend Play	Children link several pretend actions together to tell an extended story with toys	• Putting dolls in a toy car and pretend to drive to the store • Playing with race cars and take them to the pretend mechanic after a crash • Having stuffed animals pretend to go to the park, then to the pretend ice cream shop	• Asking them about what is happening or what might happen next • Following their lead! Letting them give you a role and part to play • Adding ideas/suggestions to their play (e.g., "I wonder if he needs a band-aid") instead of directing their play.



Play Stages: Requesting

Types of Play	Description	Examples	How to Help Your Child
Exploratory Play	Children play with toys by exploring with their senses, such as touching, mouthing, visually examining, smelling, banging, throwing, and dropping a toy or object.	- Banging a spoon on the table, and if it falls, pick it up and say "Spoon!" before handing it back to them - Saying the name of each food as you put it on their plate - Asking them to share what they are eating and then pretending to eat some - Blowing bubbles and then asking "More?" before blowing more	- Labeling favorite toys and objects - Labeling items and routines throughout the day, then using those names consistently - Holding an item and say what it is before handing it to them - Emphasize key words during activities and routines (e.g., naming items, activities and actions)
Combinational Play	Children combine toys together by nesting one object in another, putting objects in containers, lining, stacking, or putting toys in order.	- Offering two choices, "Do you want crackers or an apple?" for them to reach or point to and naming the items while asking - Having some toys they want next to you and naming what they reach for or what you offer them – "Do you want the red car?" - Showing them something interesting and then offering "More?" or "Again?"	- Giving your child choices - Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want - Giving small amounts of snacks or toys so they can ask for more
Cause and Effect	Cause and effect play teaches children that their actions can cause something to happen	"Blow out" a flashlight (pretend to blow it out like a candle when you push the off button). Offer "more or again" - Play freeze dance so they can verbally or gesturally request for more music - Put them in a blanket and pull them around on the ground, or get another adult to help you swing them. Model "more?" to encourage requesting	- Giving your child choices - Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want - Giving small amounts of snacks or toys so they can ask for more - Showing off your fun skills and ideas so they have to ask you to do it again and again!

Functional Play	Children use common toys or objects appropriately.	• Copying their play, or doing something slightly different next to them • Adding more toys or objects while playing with your child so that they need to ask you for them • Offering choices to your child when they are getting dressed or when offering them snacks	• Giving your child choices • Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want • Showing off your fun skills and ideas so they have to ask you to do it again and again • Playing with a toy similar to theirs so they can ask for a turn
Self-Directed Play	Children direct some basic pretend play action towards themselves.	• Collecting some materials as props and having it available so they can ask for them • Doing pretend play similar to how they are playing but with different actions, objects, or toys objects, and/or toys • Modeling the next stage of pretend play	• Giving your child choices • Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want • Playing with a toy similar to theirs so they can ask for a turn • Adding new toys or other items while playing with your child so that they can ask for a turn or to play with them.
Other Directed Pretend	Children direct basics pretend play towards another person or other toys	• Collecting some materials as props and having it available so they can ask for them • Using their stuffed animals or toys to go through daily routines, like putting the baby to bed • Showing them new themes of pretend play that they can try	• Giving your child choices • Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want • Adding new toys or other items while playing with your child so that they can ask for a turn or to play with them.

Pretend Play (also called Symbolic Play)	Children to use objects, actions, or ideas to represent other objects, actions, or ideas as play	• Joining in the pretend play theme and letting them direct you. • Adding in a fun item the child might want so they can ask for a turn	• Giving your child choices • Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want • Adding new toys or other items while playing with your child so that they can ask for a turn or to play with them.
Complex Pretend Play	Children link several pretend actions together to tell an extended story with toys	• Joining in the pretend play theme and letting them direct you. • Adding in a fun item the child might want so they can ask for a turn • Asking questions about what happens next or what you might need while playing with your child encourages them to ask you to get or do something specific.	• Giving your child choices • Putting things out of reach or in containers, so they need to ask for help to get what they want • Adding new toys or other items while playing with your child so that they can ask for a turn or to play with them.



Play Stages: Social Joint Attention

Types of Play	Description	Examples	Supporting Social Attention*	How to Help Your Child
Exploratory Play	Children play with toys by exploring with their senses, such as touching, mouthing, visually examining, smelling, banging, throwing, and dropping a toy or object.	- Putting sand in their mouth - Throwing toy cars - Dropping crayons on the ground	- Using animated facial expressions and voices - Incorporating their favorite sensory activities - Showing excitement when they come up to you or want to show you something.	- Being at the same level and face-to-face - Bringing items close to your face - Pointing to and commenting on what they are holding - Pointing to and commenting on any gestures they make towards an item
Combinational Play	Children combine toys together by nesting one object in another, putting objects in containers, lining, stacking, or putting toys in order in certain ways.	- Putting small items in a toy dump truck - Making toy cars go down a ramp - Playing with bristle blocks - Putting shapes in a shape sorter	- Using animated facial expressions and voices - Incorporating their favorite sensory activities - Showing excitement when they come up to you or want to show you something	- Putting items in a plastic egg and then closing and shaking it - Handing them items to stack or line up or helping them build, stack or line up items
Cause and Effect	Cause and effect play teaches children that their actions can cause something to happen	- Pop-up toys, light-up toys, toys with buttons or switches - Pointing to things you see while outside together - Using a wooden spoon to bang on a bowl or container	- Showing excitement when they come up to you or want to show you something - Using animated facial expressions and voices - Making sound effects while playing with your child - Showing them cause and effect by making a silly sound when they touch your nose or clap and cheer when they do something	- Saying "It went pop!" or "Look at the squirrel!" and then point to the item and then back to yourself. - Showing them cause and effect by turning a flashlight on and off, or using a spoon to bang on a pot

Functional Play	"Children use common toys or objects appropriately.	• Pushing toy cars • Putting dolls in toy cars • Throwing and rolling balls	• Showing excitement when they come up to you or want to show you something • Using animated facial expressions and voices • Making sound effects while playing with your child	• Imitating their play • Making comments such as "Your car is so fast!" or "You're bouncing an orange ball" while pointing to the toy or activity • Holding up a toy and making a comment while pointing to it
Self-Directed Play	Children direct some basic pretend play action towards themselves.	• Pretending to eat • Pretending to sleep • Pretending to talk on a play phone	• Showing excitement when they come up to you or want to show you something • Using animated facial expressions and voices • Making sound effects while playing with your child • Making comments on what they're doing	• Handing toys and items to your child that are appropriate to what they are playing and draw attention to the item before giving it to them • Using something similar to join their play, such as using your phone to pretend to talk to them when they are playing with a toy phone
Other Directed Pretend	Children link several pretend actions together to tell an extended story with toys	• Putting dolls in a toy car and pretending that they are driving to the store • Pretending to shop for fruit at the supermarket and then pretending to make a smoothie • Pretending that their teddy bear needs to go to the doctor after it falls off a swing	• Showing excitement when they want to show you something or ask you to play • Using animated facial expressions and voices • Making sound effects while playing with your child • Making suggestions or asking questions (e.g., "Where do they go now?" "What happens next?")	• Imitating what they're doing, then changing it just slightly (e.g., go from stacking a tower to building an arch or tunnel) • Adding a new item while playing with your child (e.g., "Can my bear play with your kitty?") • Drawing attention to what you or your child is doing (e.g., "Yum, this smoothie is good!" or "You're being so gentle with teddy")

Pretend Play

Children to use objects, actions, or ideas to represent other objects, actions, or ideas as play

- Stacking blocks to make a building
- Opening an imaginary door
- Using a block as a pretend phone
- Using animated facial expressions and voices
- Making sound effects while playing with your child
- Making suggestions or asking questions (e.g., "Where do they go now?" "What happens next?")
- Imitating what they're doing, then changing it just slightly (e.g., go from stacking a tower to building an arch or tunnel)
- Showing them new ways to use an object (e.g., a bowl as a hat and then drums)
- Drawing attention to what you or your child is doing (e.g., "I'm going to make a tunnel now!" "I love your tower")

Additional supporting techniques that apply to social and joint attention *all* play types

1. Be at your child's level
2. Position yourself facing your child