

Play and language

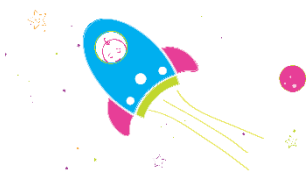
Play is important!

Playing gives children time to choose, decide and explore. They can use their imagination and learn about their world, acting out both familiar experiences (such as pretending to bath a baby or make tea) and unfamiliar experiences (including those they might be worried about, such as going to hospital or starting school).

Play helps children learn about their world and develop new ideas and new skills. Asking open questions or commenting on what they are doing can support children's confidence and learning, by showing that you are interested in what they do. If your child doesn't seem to be in a talkative mood while they're playing, then just try chatting about their play another time.

Different types of play help to develop different aspects of children's communication and language.

How does your child play?



Take time to watch and listen to your child, as they play in different ways - such as small world play (farm animals, dolls house etc), imaginary play (pretending to be someone else, dressing up or using props), construction, creative play (painting, music, playdough), outdoor play, etc etc.

- What words is your child using? How are they using their voices? Do they use a different voice during imaginary play?
- Do they use facial expression and body language to let others know how they are feeling?
- Do they interact or play with others?

Supporting play through open questions...

You can help your child to develop and extend their talking and thinking, by tuning in to them when they are talking out loud to themselves. It can be helpful to listen and respond to them by asking simple questions to extend their thinking and understanding. This can help to 'scaffold' their learning - building on what your child already knows or is interested in.

Here are some ideas for 'thinking' questions that you could use to encourage your child to talk and think as part of their play and everyday activities:

- *'I wonder what might happen if you...?'*
- *'Have you thought about...?'*
- *'How can you find out about...?'*
- *'I wonder why/ what...?' 'Why do you think that will happen...?'*



...and comments

Simply commenting on what your child is doing (saying what you see) will give your child the words they need for objects or actions: *'You're looking after your patient's injured leg very gently!'*

Made-up descriptive words are fine – have fun with words and language as you play together: *'This playdough feels smooth and squishy!'*

Try not to organise your child or take over their play. If possible, let your child organise you – it's their play!



Be a playful companion and join in your child's play world!