

## Why I Play

Your child probably spends much of her time playing. Play is the primary way she learns and develops in her early years. Play is active and fun. Your child plays for the joy of the activity itself. Play affects all areas of her development. Through play she becomes more skilled at math, language, cooperation, and problem solving. Play helps develop her curiosity, self-esteem, strength and coordination, self-direction and values.

### Social-emotional development

- By playing with your child, you promote her attachment with you. A strong attachment helps her be self-confident and secure enough to enjoy playing with her peers.
- When your child plays with others, she learns to cooperate, take another's perspective, share, negotiate, and help others.
- When your child is involved in a play experience, she gains mastery over her feelings associated with real life events that she often cannot put into words.

### Motor development

- As your child plays, she uses her body to explore the world around her. This helps her develop important motor skills necessary for later learning.

- While playing, she practices both large and small muscle skills. Many actions require careful hand control, such as arranging a blanket on the floor, or stirring a pot of pretend soup. Large muscles develop when she walks around in dress up shoes or pretends to be a puppy and crawling on the floor.

### Intellectual development

- As your child plays, she experiments and learns about cause and effect.
- Play helps her problem solve.
- Through play she develops persistence, and increases her attention span and her ability to focus—skills essential for success in school.

### Language development

- During play, your child uses words to represent objects, people, and events.
- When she pretends to be a robot or community helper such as a fire fighter, she develops the same skills needed to write a poem or story.

#### Parents,

This information is provided to you today on behalf of a special visiting program your care provider is taking part in. If you would like to receive similar visits and learn more about how your child grows and develops, please contact your local Parents as Teachers program or call 1-866-PAT4YOU to find a program in your area, or visit our website at [www.patnc.org](http://www.patnc.org)



## Let's Play Pretend

Pretend play, or make-believe, helps your child in all areas of her development: Social, language, intellectual, and motor. Research shows that when she pretend plays, she is using symbols, language, writing, and story basics. These are important components in her learning to read and write.

You play an important role in supporting the development of your child's pretend play. Here are some ideas to play pretend:

- **Observe your child's play.** By observing what your child plays with and how she plays with various objects, you are gaining a better understanding of your child. You can gain insight on her understanding of events.
- **Set the stage.** Prepare an environment where your child can pretend. Give her props to support her play. Keep in mind, your child can only pretend what she has had prior experience with. If she has never been to the beach, it would be difficult for her to pretend play that experience. It's easy to create a small collection of pretend play boxes. Possible suggestions could be:
  - **Zoo:** stuffed animals, empty pet food boxes, pet toys (new or cleaned), animal books, maps, boxes for cages
  - **Grocery Store:** calculator, bags/sacks, groceries (food boxes or cans, empty or full), coupons, play money, grocery advertisements, baskets
  - **Fire station:** rain coats, boots, hose (pieces of old garden hose), hats, telephone, walkie talkie, maps
  - **Library:** books, old magazines, videos, audio tapes, index cards, rubber stamp
- **Shoe store:** lots of shoes of various sizes and types, shoe boxes, play money, rulers, purses, socks, bags, mirror, footie (foot of panty hose)
- **Beauty/Barber shop:** brushes, combs, mirrors, hair dryer, empty shampoo bottles, towels, smocks
- **Office:** paper, pens, stapler, calculator, tote bag/brief case, envelopes, file folders, scissors, tape, telephone, old computer key board or typewriter
- **Provide time.** Allow long blocks of time for pretend play. It takes a while for your child to pick her props, think of a story line, play out the story, and expand on the story. Time allows your child to experiment with new materials before incorporating them into her play.
- **Join you child in her pretend play.** If your child is younger, you may need to help her get started by modeling or suggesting ideas for her pretend play. With an older child, you may take on a small role. By taking part in her play, you'll be sending the message that you believe her play is important and worth your time.
- **Introduce questions or new ideas to extend the play.** By giving prompts, you stretch your child's imagination while giving her vocabulary and conversational skills.
- **Back off if your child isn't interested in your idea.** Remember, this is her drama, not yours. By observing her play, or taking a small role, you will gain insights into her understanding of the event or object.

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