

# How to Use Play to Promote Language Development

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# Benefits of Play for Children

Pretend Play: Imaginative thinking and exploration leads to

- Abstract thinking
- Problem Solving
- Life skills
- Leadership skills
- Communication development
- Social Skills development
- Use of “Theory of Mind” (understanding/taking another’s perspective)
- Understanding of safety
- Self-confidence and a high self-esteem

Source:

[http://www.onestepahead.com/custserv/shop\\_smarter\\_article.jsp?pageName=Role\\_Play](http://www.onestepahead.com/custserv/shop_smarter_article.jsp?pageName=Role_Play)

# How Play and Language Development are Related

- Brady et al. (2004) and McCatheren et al. (1999) showed that children who used symbolic play had better outcomes in therapy
- Play and language development tend to mirror each other. If a child has met their play milestones but not language, it will be easier for them to learn language. However, if they have neither, it makes sense to elicit both the play and the language skills in tandem as the skills may reinforce each other

(Rhea Paul: Language Disorders –pg 270)

# How to Assess Play

- Multicultural Considerations:  
<http://blog.asha.org/2012/03/06/multicultural-considerations-in-assessment-of-play/>
- Identify the type of play the child is doing as well as the social level of play:  
<http://blog.asha.org/2013/02/14/welcome-to-kid-confidential/>
- Identify if the child's play is low compared to age as well as compared to other developmental skills

## Types of Play:

Type	Definition	Age	Examples:
<b>Functional Play</b>	-sensorimotor or practice play, children practice mental schemes by interacting with objects and people -children enjoy sensory and motor play	-Begins before age 2 -Lasts through later play stages -predominant form of play for infants and young toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Babies exploring textured books or toys</li> <li>• Babies mouthing objects</li> <li>• Toddlers climbing on various objects</li> <li>• Older kids riding bikes</li> </ul>
<b>Symbolic Play</b> (representational play)  Includes: Constructional play Dramatic play	- <u>Constructional Play</u> : use materials to make other objects and is a transition between functional play and more creative symbolic play  - <u>Dramatic Play</u> : creation of a pretend play scenario where the child pretends to be someone else	- <u>Constructional Play</u> : Begins ~2yrs. and lasts in various forms through adulthood  - <u>Dramatic Play</u> : (mastered between 3-5 yrs) and demonstrated difference between toddler play	<u>Constructional play</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building towers with blocks or legos</li> <li>• Using play dough to make an object</li> <li>• An older child being selective in the crayons he will use to draw a picture</li> <li>• Putting together a model car/plane, etc.</li> </ul> <u>Dramatic play</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toddler taking off his shoe, putting to his ear and saying "hi"</li> <li>• PK kiddos play "restaurant, doll house, farm, zoo"</li> </ul>
<b>Game Play</b>	-when children begin to play games with rules and use logic and appropriate social skills to navigate this type of play	School age and beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing game of dodge ball</li> <li>• Card games</li> <li>• Board games</li> </ul>

Kostelnik, Marjorie, Anne Soderman, and Alice Phipps Whiren. *Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: Best Practices in Early Childhood Education*. 5. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2011. Print.

## Social Stages of Play:

Social Stages	Definition	Age	Examples:
<b>Onlooker Play</b>	-child watches others during play -he may be reluctant to join or may not know how to play	-can be at various ages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children are playing in the sensory table while a 3<sup>rd</sup> child is standing by watching them</li> </ul>
<b>Solitary Play</b>	-a child plays by him/herself with no interaction with others -if the child is older exhibiting this type of play it could be because the child chooses this play (typically seen in children with ASD), they don't know how to play with others, or their play is more complex than other peer's play so they choose to remove themselves from play situations.	-<2 yrs of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18month old sits on floor with stacking rings</li> <li>• 3 year old playing with blocks by herself on the floor</li> </ul>
<b>Parallel Play</b>	-Children sit alongside each other with their own materials/toys but do not acknowledge to peer or attempt to play together	-2-3 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two children playing with their own animals, making respective animal noises, but not looking at or interacting with each other.</li> </ul>
<b>Associative Play</b>	-group play, -children playing with the SAME materials/toys or playing with similar activities, intermittently working together.	-3 ½ -4 ½ yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two children at the easel sharing markers and eraser but making their own separate pictures</li> </ul>
<b>Cooperative Play</b>	-group play -children negotiate play together, accept and create roles of play, play scenarios and cooperatively play together	-4-5 yrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 children playing with baby dolls, one is playing the "mom" and the other the "dad" role</li> </ul>

Kostelnik, Marjorie, Anne Soderman, and Alice Phipps Whiren. *Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum: Best Practices in Early Childhood Education*. 5. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2011. Print.

# Westby Play Scale

- In 1980, Carol Westby created an assessment/scale that shows you what play skills children should have at certain ages as well as the language skills that should parallel them:

[http://lshss.pubs.as  
ha.org/article.aspx  
?articleid=1775680](http://lshss.pubs.as<br/>ha.org/article.aspx<br/>?articleid=1775680)

## Appendix A

### Symbolic Play Scale Check List

Play	Language
Stage I - 9 to 12 months <input type="checkbox"/> Awareness that objects exist when not seen; finds toy hidden under scarf <input type="checkbox"/> Means-end behavior - crawls or walks to get what he wants; pulls string toys <input type="checkbox"/> Does not mouth or bang all toys - some used appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> No true language; may have performative words, (words that are associated with actions or the total situation) Exhibits following communicative functions: <input type="checkbox"/> Request (instrumental) <input type="checkbox"/> Command (regulatory)
Stage II - 13 to 17 months <input type="checkbox"/> Purposeful exploration of toys; discovers operation of toys through trial and error; uses variety of motoric schemas <input type="checkbox"/> Hands toy to adult if unable to operate	<input type="checkbox"/> Context dependent single words, for example, child may use the word "car" when riding in a car, but not when he sees a car; words tend to come and go in child's vocabulary Exhibits following communicative functions: <input type="checkbox"/> Request <input type="checkbox"/> Protesting <input type="checkbox"/> Command <input type="checkbox"/> Label <input type="checkbox"/> Interactional <input type="checkbox"/> Response <input type="checkbox"/> Personal <input type="checkbox"/> Greeting
Stage III - 17 to 19 months	

# When Play Skills are Impaired

- Understand where the child is in the developmental progression of play skills. Imitate and praise the child's play skills that are at his level and model and encourage play skills that are slightly above his level.
- Teach parents how to play with the child at his developmental level
- When possible, work on parallel language and play skills together as in the Westby Play Scale



# Improving Play When the Child is Stuck in Functional/Sensory Play

- Hold items that the child is exploring close to your face
- Encourage social games like peek-a-boo, horsey rides, etc.

(Source:

<http://www.asha.org/events/convention/handouts/2011/lash-mccoy/> )

- Establish joint attention:

<https://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/establishing-joint-attention-therapy-for-children-who-arent-tuned-in/>

- Model constructional play like building with blocks
- Model auto-symbolic play (pretending on yourself – drinking from cup, going to sleep, etc.)

# Expanding Play for Children in the Constructive Play Phase

- Show them how to extend the play they're already doing (stacking blocks and then parking a car inside)
- Introduce them to a larger range of materials

(Source:

<http://www.asha.org/events/convention/handouts/2011/lash-mccoy/> )

- Model auto-symbolic play (pretend play on yourself)
- Model tool use (using a stick to reach/activate a toy)

# Expanding Play for Children in the Symbolic/Dramatic Play Phases

- Model more types of auto-symbolic play (on yourself)
- Model symbolic play that extends beyond the child's self (taking care of baby dolls or pretending to feed others)
- Model pretend play by combining multiple toys or materials together (stirring with spoon in pot or driving cars through block structures)
- Role play daily, familiar activities
- Role play novel, less frequently occurring activities
- Link two or more pretend play actions together

# Expanding Play for Children with Solitary Play

- Get close to the child and do your own play (similar to what the child is doing) near him
- Encourage the child to be near other children when playing
- Place other children who are playing similarly near the child

Goal: Tolerating Parallel Play

# Expanding Play for Children with Parallel Play

- Set up activities where the children must share materials even though they won't necessarily be playing directly together
  - One sand table/sensory tub
  - One tub of art supplies
  - One set of blocks
  - One set of cars on a road play mat
- Pair the child up with other children who play similarly with those materials
- Start with only one other child and introduce more children as possible

Goal: Associative Play

# Expanding Play for Children with Associative Play

- Set up activities where the children will have to work together to complete the activity
  - Playing on a see saw/rocking boat
  - Playing catch
  - Pulling each other in a wagon
- Stage pretend activities by getting the children started
  - Assign roles in a scenario (“you’re the dad, you’re the mom, and here’s your baby”)
  - Pair the student with difficulties with more capable students who will take a more dominant role (at first)

Goal: Cooperative Play

# How to Teach Language Through Play

- When play skills are not impaired, you don't have to teach them directly but can instead use play to make your lessons more memorable and to teach language.
- This is especially effective for young children or those who are resistant to drill-and-practice type work.
- Play makes lessons more engaging which means the child is more likely to remember the lessons and activities afterwards. They are also more likely to reenact lessons that you did and practice the skills later

# How to Set Up a Play-Based Session

1. Choose your targets: decide ahead of time what you will target
2. Create an episodic story-like play scenario that will allow multiple opportunities to practice/demonstrate the skill: The more story-like it is, the better they will remember. “Associated events scaffold memories”
3. Make your targets memorable: Find ways to work your targets into the meaningful parts of the story. For example, if you’re working on a certain sound, have the doll’s name start with the sound and bring in real objects for the doll to play with that start with that sound

Source: <http://blog.asha.org/2013/09/03/planning-a-play-based-therapy-session/>



# Examples of Play-Based Sessions to Target Different Skills

The following slides demonstrate some examples of play-based activities that you could do to target various speech and language skills:

- Articulation

# Play-Based Session for Articulation

Puppet Goes to a Party:

- Get out a puppet and name him something that contains your target sound
- Tell the child a story that the puppet is going to a party and he must bring food that contains your sound
- Go through a bag and pull out all of the play food (or real food!) and talk about if it starts with the sound
- Once you find several things, pretend to cook them and prepare them in dishes for the party (or make real food like a snack mix full of foods that contain the sound!)

# Play-Based Session for Vocab (Clothes)

## Puppet Does Laundry

- Introduce Puppet and explain that puppet is in trouble because she didn't do her chores. She wants to go play outside in the snow but she has to do her laundry first
- Bring out a basket of laundry and ask the child if she can help sort
- Put piles/tubs out that are labeled with different types of clothing (the words you want to target)
- Help the child sort the clothes into the correct tubs so Puppet can go out to play
- Once the chore is done, help Puppet pick out the correct clothing items to go play in the snow (or go swimming, etc.)

# Play-Based Session for Vocab (Categorizing)

## Playing House

- Choose objects from 2 different categories (or however many the child needs to work on) and throw them around the room.
- When the child comes in, tell her you're playing house. She's the mom and you're the unruly child. She has to tell you to clean up your room.
- Have the child look at all the stuff with you and decide on the 3 categories that will be used. She has to tell you to sort things into the 3 categories
- Ask her for help on sorting the first few items and then once you "get it", have her watch you to make sure you do it right. Screw up often so she has a chance to correct you.

# Play-Based Session for Vocab (Descriptors)

## My Monster Triplets

- Get three monster (or animal) stuffed animals and put them in high chairs, bumbo seats, or other baby seats.
- When the child walks in, say “thank goodness you’re here! My triplets are here with me and they are HUNGRY but they’re so picky. I need you to help me feed them.”
- Tell the child that each of the monsters will only eat things of a particular descriptor (hard, soft, sticky, sweet, green, round, etc.). Have pictures of objects (or real objects) that match each of the 3 descriptors
- Help the child decide which monster will eat each of the foods based on the descriptors

# Play-Based Session for Grammar (Pronouns He/She)

## Babysitting Twins

- Get two baby dolls (a boy and a girl). Place the babies in two different holders, like cribs, strollers, or baby carriers.
- Tell the child that the twins need to be taken care of but they're very fussy. Hold up baby items and tell her that one of the babies needs it (like a bottle). Say "he needs it" or "she needs it". Help the child determine which baby needs it based on the gender and the pronoun



# Play-Based Session for Grammar (Articles “a/some”)

## Playing Chef

- Pretend the child is a chef at a fancy restaurant and you are his sous chef. Make up recipe cards by taking pictures of groups of play food ingredients and writing the dish name at the top. Some of the ingredients should come in pairs or large groups while others are single.
- Have the child draw a card and pretend that is an order coming in. Have the child tell you what ingredients are needed by saying “a \_\_\_\_” or “some \_\_\_\_” depending on if he needs one or more than one.
- Have the child put the ingredients in the pot and stir them to cook the dish

# Play-Based Session for Grammar (Past Tense)

## Playing Reporter

- Tell the child that he needs to be a news reporter. Act out a scene by yourself, with other children, or with puppets and have the child take pictures of the event with your phone or digital camera
- Have the child use the photos that he took to re-tell the story using past tense verbs. Give the child a pretend microphone and have him say the newscast for the others in the room or for a camera (real/pretend)



# Play-Based Session for Asking Questions

## Playing Detective

- Pretend the child is a detective coming in to work. Tell him the details of the case of the missing cookie jar. Tell him the cookie jar was in the kitchen when Mom and Dad left to go to a movie. The babysitter, Billy, and Molly were all present in the house during the event along with the cat and the dog.
- Pretend to be each of the characters (or use puppets) and have the child ask each character questions to figure out who stole the cookie jar and where they hid it.

# Play-Based Session for Answering Questions

## Taking your Baby to the Doctor/ER

- Uh oh! Baby got hurt. Act out a scene where a doll falls off a bike, runs into a wall, or some other disaster strikes.
- Tell the child she must take the doll to the doctor or to the emergency room. When she gets there, pretend you're the doctor and ask her questions about what happened so you can help make her better.

# How to Obtain Continuing Education Credit

- If you need continuing education credit for this presentation, please email Carrie at [Carrie@SpeechAndLanguageKids.com](mailto:Carrie@SpeechAndLanguageKids.com) to receive a copy of the continuing education certification letter.
- You will receive 1 Certification Maintenance Hour (CMH) for attending live, which is like a CEU but I can't report it to ASHA so you'll need to keep track of this form and report it yourself.
- Let me know if you are outside the US or are not a certified member of ASHA (you'll get a different certificate)

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