



Play and Leisure Pretend Play

Pretend Play

Through pretend play children learn to express themselves and practice adult and cultural roles. Pretend play develops your child's social, emotional, language and thinking skills whilst nurturing their imagination. Children start by pretending to do everyday activities, they then participate in pretend play with dolls/teddies. They then link pretend play into action sequences and finally join in pretend play games with other children.



Activity Ideas

You can create a pretend play box in your house to spark your child's imagination through play. Here is a list of some items you may wish to include:

- Empty containers or large boxes.
- Old clothes, shoes, hats, bags, jewellery, blankets.
- Plastic or play cooking utensils, cups, plates and cutlery.
- Soft toys and dolls.
- Notepad and crayons, blackboard and chalk.



Encourage your child to play imaginatively by themselves, with friends and siblings and with adult family members or carers.

The Cardboard Box!

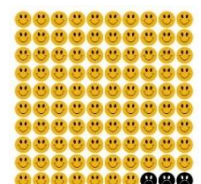
An empty cardboard box can inspire a child to create an imaginary item such as a boat, castle, car, unicorn, and dragon or pirate ship.

Provide your child with a range of materials to transform this box into an imaginary item for example other recyclable materials (e.g. containers/toilet roll tubes/ yoghurt cartons), crayons, pencils, pens, stickers, scissors (with supervision) and stamps.



Spend time with your child discussing what it is they are making and how they are going to play with it afterwards. Support your child to find the tools they need in the house to create their imaginary object. It may be that the castle needs a flag!

You could support your child to create other objects using old cardboard boxes for example, a knight's shield, a phone, a hobby horse, and masks.





Building a Den

While encouraging your child to play imaginatively it also supports physical development. This activity can be done inside or outside. This is a fun activity for siblings to do together and even to involve an adult. Encourage your child by providing them with objects from around the house, for example:

- Pegs
- Sheets
- Cushions
- Clothes horse
- Chairs
- Cardboard boxes
- Using furniture for example beds



Animal Role Play - Encourage your child to make different animal noises and movements. You could enjoy a trip to the local wildlife park/ zoo/ farm to spark their imagination. At home, you could make animal costumes and masks with old clothes and cardboard from around the house. Another activity that could enhance the experience would be to make animals out of other objects such as play dough.

Happy Families - Let your child or children act out a family scene. The child can play taking on a range of roles. Encourage your child to act out the role by providing them with appropriate props. Many children enjoy playing with a doll and you can support your child to act this role by prompting them with a range of actions such as feed the baby, change the babies' clothes, and cuddle the baby. Children may wish to act out family scenes using Barbie's and action men.

Dress Up - There are endless opportunities for children's dress up. Children enjoy dressing up as their favourite characters. They may want to spend the afternoon as a fireman, a fairy or a knight. You don't need a special costume, why not use old clothes instead encouraging even more imagination.



Jobs - Children like to act out and take on the role of different occupations. This gives you the opportunity to teach your child about these professions too. For example, a bus driver, a teacher, a vet, a doctor, a policeman.

Cops and Robbers - Let the children decide who is playing the policeman role and who the criminal is. Create an area of the "jail". You could dress up as your character and create pretend police cars and other objects.

Restaurants - Pretend dinner time is at a restaurant. Involve your child in creating the menu which they could then draw or write on the "menu". Your child could dress up with an apron. Encourage your child to be involved in the creation of the meal. During the mealtime, you child could act out the role of the waitress, taking orders and helping deliver these to the table. They can also then be supported to clear the table and wash up at the end!



Putting on a Play - Your child and their friends could play imaginatively and put on a play! If they need help to start, provide them with some themed suggestions. They can use the dressing up box to create their own costumes for the play. Children could create tickets for the play which you could “buy” from them. Once the play is ready, help them to create a stage with seating for the “audience”.

Play Shops - Using old boxes and tins to fill “shelves” to create a shop. The child could create a till and money out of old cardboard and paper. Other family members in the house and friends could “buy” from the shop.

Teddy Bears Picnic - Have a teddy bears picnic! This link provides a nice idea of how to incorporate lots of learning skills into a teddy bears picnic:

www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2013/jul/10/bear-hunt-teddy-bear-picnic-games



Charades - There are many family friendly games and board games that can encourage your child to think imaginatively. Charades or Pictionary can be played only requiring a pencil and paper. Board games such as Cranium and Articulate are fun family games which have junior editions. There are now many mobile apps which can encourage children to think and act imaginatively for example “Heads Up”.

Construction - Children who enjoy construction are building imaginatively. Construction can take place in a range of ways for example building sand castles, building blocks, Lego.

Drama - For children of all ages who are showing a particular interest in acting, why not consider if there are any local drama groups in your area?