

Playing = Learning

What a Parent Should Know about Dramatic Play

- Dramatic play is when your child uses their imaginations or pretends.
- It is your child's **way of understanding** their own experiences
- It builds your child's **thinking skills** and the skills they will need for school.
- It encourages your child **think abstractly** (when a child uses a block as a phone, they are learning to think using symbols.)
- Abstract/symbolic thinking will **help them with reading, writing and math.**
- It encourages your child to **solve problems.**
- It teaches your child to **learn from their mistakes.**



- It teaches your child about other peoples' feelings and perspectives.
- It teaches your child how to **cooperate and negotiate.**
- It teaches your child how to play with others and respond appropriately.
- Your child gets a chance to be anything they want to be just by pretending, and that's emotionally satisfying and **builds their self-esteem.**
- It builds your child's **language skills.**
- It increases your child's **vocabulary.**
- It gives your child a chance to experiment with language and learn to use it appropriately. (Doctors say different things than store clerks.)
- It helps your child be able to **concentrate and pay attention.**
- It helps your child **control their own behavior** and be less aggressive.

How to Encourage Dramatic Play at Home

- **Provide uninterrupted time, space and materials** that support your child's dramatic play
- **Make a space** or let your child use spaces in your home where they can play. Let them put a bedspread over the dining room table to make a cave or fort.
- If you can, **provide real materials**, rather than store-bought toys. A broken or discarded cell phone is better than a toy telephone and real but safe kitchen items are better than plastic play sets.
- If you can, have **a variety of materials** on hand so they can adapt them in their own way (different kinds of hats, stuffed animals, purses/wallets, cash box, a phone, etc.)
- Collect **simple materials that support literacy** – ones that you child can use to pretend to read and write (making a list, reading to a stuffed animal, paying for something in the store, etc.)
- Since your child's play is based on what they've experienced, make sure they have a **variety of experiences out in the community** (going to the store, getting a haircut).
- **Read to your child.** It will encourage dramatic play.
- **Encourage them to think** about their experiences by asking, "What would you do if you were a _____?"
- Be your child's play partner, but **let your child control the play.**
- When playing with your child, remember to **ask questions** about their play, and add additional materials.
- You can help your child plan their play and then **talk with them about it** afterwards.

