

Imaginative Play

Principles

1. Use simple home-made toys that encourage the imagination.
2. It is essential that the child plays with other children.
3. Encourage the child to talk about their games.
4. Imaginative play should be fun; join in and have fun.
5. Provide lots of models of behaviour for the child; and extend their play. Even imaginative children can get stuck in a play routine--your role is to provide interesting materials and suggestions to find new ways to play.
6. Children need lots of different experiences in order to act them out.
7. Use spontaneous events that happen during the day to suggest new games, eg if somebody cuts themselves, you can turn it into a hospital game.

Activities to Encourage Early Pretend-Play

1. Imaginative play begins through imitation. At first the child will need to observe lots of modelled behaviour, before they will begin to copy pretend-play. Using everyday objects, demonstrate make-believe play, eg pretend to feed yourself from a spoon during a make-believe tea party.
2. Hand the child some everyday items, eg cup, comb, flannel. If the child makes no attempt at play, but just bangs or mouths them, demonstrate the activity on the child, eg comb their hair. Again give them the objects and repeat the model if necessary. When the child carries out the action reward them with lots of praise and reinforce their action by imitating them.
3. Next encourage the child to use a toy cup, comb, etc in the same way.



Activities to Promote Large-Doll Play

1. Using a large doll, carry out various actions with toy objects, eg cuddling, washing, feeding and walking. Keep them simple at first. Give the doll to the child and encourage them to carry out the actions. If they use the items on themselves, then take, for example, a cup--feed yourself and then the doll, saying 'Now, it's dolly's turn'. Hand the cup to the child and encourage them to feed the doll. Give them lots of praise when they do.
2. Provide the child with toys that allow them to copy everyday activities in the home. At first they may need to use them alongside real activities, eg when mum bathes baby, the child bathes the doll.

Activities for Early Make-Believe Play

The child will spontaneously carry out simple role or make-believe activities at 2 years old.

1. Let the child act out their recent experiences using dolls, eg a visit to the hairdressers, going to the park.
2. Puppets can be used in a similar way to dolls. They can wave goodbye, eat dinner, wash, etc.
3. Use hand, glove or finger puppets to play peek-a-boo and hiding games.
4. Finger-play: paint faces on your fingers and use them as puppets. Make them run, jump, dance, etc.

