Communication and Play - 1

Encouraging Communication through Play

Play is one of the most important ways your child learns about the world. It helps them interact with others, solve problems and learn new words. Play develops a child’s imagination and most importantly their language skills.

How you can help:

• Have regular times when you and your child can play together. A few minutes everyday is better than a longer session once a week
• Encourage your child to play with others (grandparents, brothers, sisters and other children)
• Have play materials / toys that your child finds interesting (these do not have to be expensive and can include real objects e.g. a pan and wooden spoon. You can also borrow from a toy library if there is a one in your area)
• Add play to everyday routines e.g. young children will enjoy pretending to dust, clean, cook etc
• Play is a good way to talk and spend time with your child
• Comment on what your child is doing, rather than ask questions
• Let your child lead the play, follow what they are doing, rather than getting them to follow you
• Nursery provides a good environment for your child to learn to play and socialise

Activities you can do to help your child:

Exploring through play - at this stage your child may enjoy:

• Kicking a large ball
• Building with simple blocks e.g. building a tower
• Experimenting with crayons and pencils (but at this age we would not expect them to be drawing or colouring in)
• Simple jigsaw puzzles and inset boards

Pretend and Imaginative play - which would include:

• Pretending to have a drink or brush hair
• Feeding a teddy or a doll
• Copying housework
• Simple safe tasks in the garden
• Pretending to put teddy to bed
• Pretending to talk on the telephone
• Pretending to be Mummy and teddy is the child e.g. puts teddy in the pram and pretends to go to the shops
• Role reversal – taking turns to be the shopkeeper and the shopper.

**Important factors to remember at this stage**

Do not try to teach your child. At this stage simply share the materials and talk about what your child is doing. However you can show them other things they could do with the toys or materials e.g. ‘if your child is pretending to drink from a cup you could pretend to give teddy a drink’, or ‘pretend the drink is hot or needs milk’.

Encourage them to use the materials appropriately e.g. building a tower with bricks and then knocking it over is fun however simply throwing bricks or toys around is not appropriate and should be discouraged.

**Suggestions for the toy box at this stage**

**Investigative play:**
- Bricks
- Jack in the box or other pop up toys
- Musical instruments or other noise makers
- Containers for water play
- Different sizes and colours of paper
- Paints and brushes, chalks and plastic scissors
- Pedal bike
- Puzzles and boxes

**Imaginative play:**
- Zoo and farm animals
- Toy garage and vehicles
- Dolls house and furniture
- Items for shopping and bags (but not plastic ones) or baskets
- Toy household objects e.g. iron, cooker, washer etc
- Toy gardening equipment

**For further information please contact:** Department of Speech and Language Therapy
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