Communication and play - 2

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. Helping your child learn to play and joining in with their play is very important at this age.

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 to and spend time with your child
- Different experiences will help develop your child’s imagination e.g. going to nursery, shopping or the park
- Nursery provides an good environment for your child to learn to socialise and play

Activities you can do to help your child:

Exploring through play – your child may enjoy:

- Sand and water play
- Throwing and kicking balls
- Matching colours and sorting objects (e.g. big and little)
- Scribbling and attempting to make pictures e.g. early attempts at drawing a person
- Cutting with safe scissors
- Playing with large interlocking bricks

Pretend and imaginative play – your child may enjoy:

- Acting out everyday routines e.g. feeding teddy, pretending to bath teddy, putting him to bed and pretending to read him a story
- Dressing up and pretending to be other people e.g. Grandad, the postman, a princess etc.
- Acting out less familiar routines e.g. going to the doctors or dentist
- Playing with an imaginary friend
- Playing with glove puppets
**Important factors to remember at this stage**

Your child will now play for longer and act out routines that they may have observed. Your child will learn about the world through role play e.g. ‘pretending to be the shop keeper’. This will also help them learn new skills like using their memory, doing things in the correct order and thinking for themselves. Role play is essential for developing communication skills.

Children at this age will tend to play alongside other children however they are beginning to include others in their play. This helps to develop their social skills.

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

**Exploring through play:**
- Balls of different sizes
- Small bricks
- Playdough – with cutters and rollers
- Construction activities e.g. interlocking blocks

Remember at this age children like large outdoor equipment e.g. slides or swings.

**Pretend and imaginative play:**
- Dressing up clothes
- Farm and zoo animals
- Glove puppets
- Model vehicles and people
- Dolls house and garage
- Water play e.g. boats, jugs etc.
- Copying actions from favourite CDs and DVDs that have rhymes and music
- Toy tea sets

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