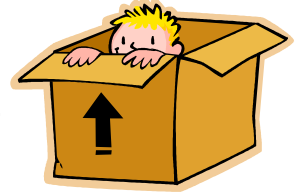


Developing Play and Social Interaction Skills

Play is one of the key skills in learning language. In play children learn about people and things, their qualities and how they go together. This helps them to explore new ideas which are based on their experiences of the world i.e. what you have seen and heard. Children develop different stages in their play and this starts at a very young age. They will gradually.....

- **Explore toys** i.e. sucking, feeling, banging, looking and throwing toys.
- **Learn about cause and effect** i.e. pressing a button to make a noise.
- **Play with toys and objects according to what you do with them** i.e. pretend to talk on a phone.
- **Play imaginatively** i.e. using a box as a bus, having a tea party with teddy and dolly.
- **Find it easier to share their game as they get older** e.g. let you take a turn in their game, let you suggest an idea for their game.



The Stages of Social Play in Typical Development

0-2 years	Solitary - Children play alone, limited interaction with other children
2-2.5 years	Spectator – observes other children playing, but does not join in
2.5-3 years	Parallel – plays alongside others, but does not play with them
3-4 years	Associate – starts to interact with others in play, develops friendships
4-6+ years	Cooperative – plays together with others



Turn taking and giggle games

Play with people is very important for developing early communication skills. By playing as partners with your child in 'giggle games', they will learn to take turns: watching your moves and making their own to get to their favourite part of the game. They will learn a new sequence with a beginning, middle and end and they will learn how to control the game and enjoy it over and over again. It's important for your child to learn how to take turns, so that they can play happily with other children. Turn taking is also important in learning to talk, as children need to wait for someone else to speak, listen to what they say and then reply. Try some of the following activities:

Giggle Games

Tickles **Ring a roses**
Chase **Peekaboo**
Round the garden
Lifting up and down

Turn taking games

Rolling a ball **Skittles**
Bean bags in bucket **Car run**
Building a tower
Musical instruments

Developing Play and Social Interaction Skills

Creating opportunities

Children improve their communication by having all their attempts rewarded, but also by giving them a model of a better way to get what they want. You can offer them an easy way to communicate to get things quickly.

- Giving them a packet of snack without opening it, hold your hand out for them to pass it back to be opened.
- Offer choices.
- Blow up a balloon and let it go, wait for them to show you they want it again, hold your hand out for them to give it to you.
- Blow bubbles, put the lid on the bottle and put it on the floor. Hold your hand out and wait for them to hand it back to be opened.
- Wind up a simple clockwork toy, wait for it to run down, then hold your hand out for them to pass it to you for more.
- Leave your child's empty cup out, look signs that they want a drink, hold your hand out near the cup for them to hand it to you.



When you are supporting your child to practise giving these messages, there may be several steps. Initially, you may need to help your child by being close at hand and holding your hand out as soon as you can see them getting frustrated. Sometimes your child may need someone else to put the object in your hand. Gradually to help your child develop more advanced communication you could slowly move further away or into another room to see if they will come and find you and to teach them to travel to make a message.

Intensive interaction/OWLing

There is a well-known approach to positive play with your child that we call 'OWLing'. This is encouraging you to look at what your child is doing before using any language with them.



Observe all that they are doing, looking at, interested in e.g. they may not be interested in stacking the bricks but might like to line them up.

Wait to see how they may communicate with you, give them the chance to show you what they are interested in and allow them more time.

Listen to any sounds, noises, words and look for subtle signs of communication.

IMPORTANT: Your child may not yet be playing with toys and toys are not always important in play. Notice your child's interests as they develop and join in with them e.g. banging toys, spinning wheels, twiddle string. Copy them and see if they copy you.