

## Section 2.4

# Learning that toys represent real things/objects (symbolic understanding)

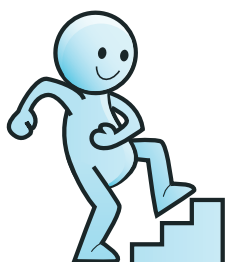


### Why is this important?

Symbolic play is the ability to play meaningfully with objects (e.g. drinking from a toy cup). First, children learn to use real things (e.g. putting mummy's keys in the door) and then they learn to use toy objects (e.g. putting toy keys in the door). Like language, symbolic play involves the use of symbols: symbolic play is therefore crucial as it provides an enjoyable context for language development.

### What to do

- Gather together some toys which represent real things from the child's own experience:
  - ★ Toy spoon
  - ★ Pretend keys
  - ★ Toy cup
  - ★ Pretend brush
  - ★ Toy telephone
- Choose one toy and encourage the child to show you what to do with it (e.g. drink from the cup, put the keys in the door) as one would with the real thing.



### Step up

- Encourage the child to use the toys with a dolly or a teddy to act out everyday routines.
- Extend the range of toys and situations – include a doll's house, home corner, farm or garage.

### Step down

- Model what to do with the toy and encourage the child to copy.
- Guide the child's hand to use the toy meaningfully.

