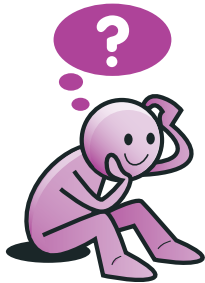


Section 3.1

Learning to make sense of the world through play

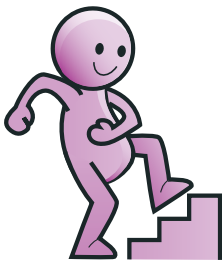


Why is this important?

Pretend play helps children understand how objects are used in the real world and also leads to an awareness that toys can represent real things and people. As play skills develop, so does the knowledge of the words that represent objects as they are heard in context during play. Play is essential for children's learning and for the development of language.

What to do

- Get together a large doll or teddy (*not* miniature) and some real everyday objects (e.g. cup, brush, flannel).
- Offer the child one of the objects (e.g. cup).
- Encourage the child to use the cup to 'Give dolly a drink'.



Step up

- Once the child is using real objects with the doll, introduce doll-sized objects that represent 'real' objects (e.g. toy cup, doll's bottle).
- Expand the variety of 'real' situations which can be acted out in play.
- Use a small sequence of pretend play actions (e.g. washing doll, drying doll and putting doll to bed).

Step down

- Play with the child and include the doll in your play. Show how you can be given a drink and then give doll a drink.
- Use gesture and signs and lots of repetition.
- Using single words, name things that capture the child's interest, to help develop the child's understanding of the words in context.
- Guide the child's hand (e.g. brush doll's hair together).
- Begin with very few toys and gradually introduce more; model examples of the pretend play.
- Give the child time and space to experiment and discover what to do for himself/herself.

