

Other things to try: 4g

Joining play sequences together

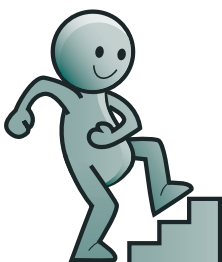


Why is this important?

Play is a crucial part of language development. Play is fun and provides multiple opportunities for children to practise skills they have already acquired and also to learn new ones (turn-taking, sharing, attention and listening, building vocabulary, increasing and varying sentence structures). Play and language develop in tandem as they each become increasingly sophisticated. Play also enables children to reflect on their experiences and make sense of them.

What to do

- Gather together a range of high-interest toys and equipment (e.g. trains, cars, doll house, animals).
- Follow the child's lead in play (e.g. if he/she chooses the animals, you play alongside with animals).
- Expand the play (e.g. if the animals are going into the field, show how they can eat the grass, have a drink or go into the barn).
- Demonstrate real-life sequences which are familiar to the child (e.g. washing a doll, drying the doll, dressing the doll).
- As you play, use short sentences to explain what is happening.
- This can be developed into a play script where language is associated with key actions.



Step up

- Expand the sequences of play into a longer narrative. Following familiar routines is ideal for this (e.g. waking up in the morning, getting dressed, eating breakfast, brushing teeth, walking to school).
- The home corner and themed areas are ideal to expand and develop sequences with increasing sophistication.
- Encourage the child to tell *you* what to do in the sequence (e.g. you could pretend to take a dog for a walk and let the child choose what to do next).
- Use junk objects to represent real objects (e.g. a cardboard box for a car).
- Read a familiar short story together and pretend to act out what happens. This can make an excellent small-group activity.
- Vary the language structures and the vocabulary you use.

Step down

- Demonstrate what to do (e.g. put the baby in bed, wake him up, get breakfast).
- Keep the order exactly the same.
- Learn the order with no words first.
- Add words, but then keep it exactly the same every time you do it. This is called a joint action routine.
- Start with short (two) sequences of play (e.g. wash and dry doll, cook and eat).
- Gradually build the sequences up to three (e.g. wash with water, wash with soap, dry).
- Demonstrate the first few sequences of play and encourage the child to add to these (e.g. 'wash teddy' by giving opportunities through demonstration).
- Offer choices about what could happen next (e.g. pretend you are going to the zoo: 'What do you want to see, the elephants or the tigers?'). Then add this to the whole sequence.

