

**DEVELOPING PRETEND PLAY SKILLS**



**Firstly, value the way your child plays already:**

- ◇ Your child may currently be engaging in exploratory and functional play (exploring objects with their senses, and using objects in the intended ways eg, stacking, lining up, rolling cars along, puzzles).
- ◇ They may do actions over and over.
- ◇ They may not respond to you calling their name as they are learning at a deep level in a way that many other children cannot.
- ◇ This play is valuable and we do not want to discourage it – watch them and copy or join in if they let you. Use the opportunity to learn more about what they’re interest in, and to get interactions going with them.
- ◇ During a child’s “down” time, let them play how they choose, as long as it is safe.

**Play should be...**

**Exploratory**

**Fun**

**Regulating**

**...No matter how different it looks to you!**

During specified teaching times, we can provide opportunities to help children develop different skills using toys as a resource. We will do this when they’re interested and ready. Next skill: Pretend Play.

### Next, offer opportunities for your child to learn pretend play skills:

- ◇ Pretend play is also known as symbolic play or imaginative play.
- ◇ Developing this type of play is linked with developing communication skills- so is a key focus for helping your child!
- ◇ To help your child with early pretending in play:
  - Use motivating toys (e.g. a favourite cuddly toy or character toy)
  - Start with using a mix of toys and real items (e.g. you could feed teddy a real apple or brush Peppa's teeth using a real toothbrush)
  - Model very familiar actions that your child will be aware of from their own experiences (e.g. include a character toy in snack, make another talk on a phone or do a bedtime routine for a toy). You could even start to model the action at the time of a daily routine to make it more meaningful for your child
- ◇ Next develop the pretending by:
  - Introducing realistic toys (e.g. plastic food and tea set, doll's house, play park and characters)
  - Modelling very simple single step pretend actions (e.g. the crocodile eating cake or Iggle Piggle going down the slide)
  - Repeating single step actions again and again to show your child
  - Making the action fun by adding something playful (e.g. crocodile saying "yuk!" when he eats the cake)
- ◇ When your child is able to do some single step pretend play actions, extend this by modelling how to add actions to make a sequence of play (e.g. stirring fruit in a bowl and *then* feeding it to teddy)

