

Fun ways to Play

Games, Toys and Experiences

- Children learn through their senses. As well as touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing, the senses also include ‘proprioception’ (body awareness) and ‘vestibular’ (balance and movement). It is important for your child’s development that they get lots of opportunity to experience a wide range of sensations
- Children need a range of play experiences. As well as activities that develop hand and finger coordination, they need games that let them use their big muscles and develop large movements. It is important that your child has toys that are suitable for their stage of development – but toys need not be expensive and simple household items can keep a toddler amused for many an hour!
- Don’t forget to let your child play with items from nature, such as sand, water, shells and pine cones
- From the age of 2, your child will use their imagination in games. There are lots of fun things you can do to support this and join in – let your own imagination run free!
 - Imaginary Home: Give your child play food, a dustpan and brush, tea sets, and let them play at being a home owner. Add stuffed toys, dolls, and a high chair or play bath and let them role-play being a mummy or daddy
 - Imaginary Office: Let your child play at being at work. Give them an old keyboard, a toy phone, pens and paper or a handbag. Give them forms from the bank or post office to fill in
 - Imaginary Shop: Using empty boxes or packages, canvas shopping bags, plastic cards, play money and a till or tin to collect it in, help your child to set up their own shop. They will love having you as their customer!
- Play in different positions. Experiencing a range of different body positions during play will help your child to develop their muscles and stability. Activities do not always need to be done at a table and you could try:
 - Lying on tummy, propped up on elbows
 - On all fours – elbows and knees
 - Standing
 - High kneeling at a table
 - Half kneeling
 - Lying on one side
- Encourage independence and give praise. As children get older they will want to do more for themselves and become more independent. Encourage this by giving support and praise and give them time to try doing things for themselves. Help your child to feel safe trying new things and reassure them it is okay not to get it right the first time. Give lots of praise and be specific, for example “Thank you for waiting quietly while I was talking on the phone”. Try to give more praise than criticism. Praise doesn’t need to be in words - hugs, smiles, a wink or a pat on the back can mean just as much. Tell your children what they have done well and that



you are proud of them. And give praise for trying new things, persevering and for being helpful and friendly so that praise is not always linked to achievement