

Childcare and Parenting **14+** Series

Play and Creativity



Online Version



Family Health Service
Department of Health

Play is children's work. Children spend most of their time in play to explore and learn about the world around them. With their intellectual growth and advance in language development, the two-year-olds begin to show more sophisticated play. They will pretend one object to be another or act out daily experiences in play. Making use of opportunities to play with your child helps facilitate his imagination and creativity.

Types of Play

Active Play

Two-year-olds are active and restless. They like to explore the limits of their bodies and learn about the relative position of their bodies in space around them by circling around, skipping, hopping, or rocking on chairs. They begin to climb, run, pedal on tricycles, kick, throw or catch balls. With safety measures taken, outdoor activities are the most suitable means to facilitate their physical ability.

- ★ Encourage your child to climb on play facilities in the playground while staying close to watch him.
- ★ Besides guiding him how to ride a tricycle, you may pretend to be a pedestrian, a gas station attendant, a car mechanic or even a gate or a traffic light to add imagination to his play.



- ★ Play ball games with him. Let him throw a ball at some large aiming targets like a basket, a big piece of drawing, or rows of plastic jugs. Imagining you are playing stall games in a fair will create more fun.



- ★ Take him outdoor to the countryside or an open space in the neighbourhood to run around and explore. He will stop and show interest in things seen on the way such as touching pebbles and plants, circling around a fire hydrant, or examining crevices on the pavement. Let him take his time to explore and tell him more about the things he is interested in.



Constructive Play

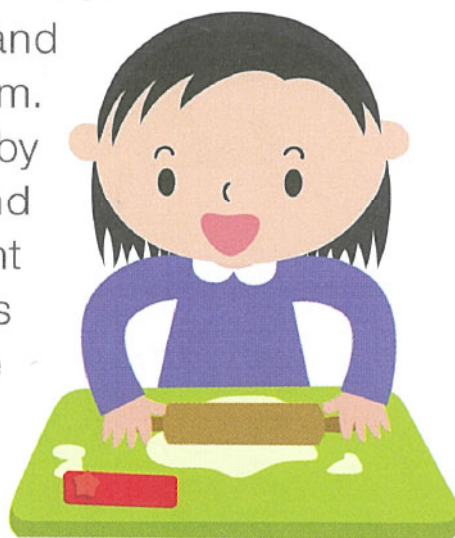


Your child now begins to play constructively by putting things together to represent new objects. This kind of play includes block building, drawing, pasting, and playing with sand, clay and dough. Besides facilitating creativity, these activities also help in developing hand and finger skills, and learning concepts of shape, colour, texture and space.

★ Playing with traditional blocks can be more creative than construction models as they do not give instructions for children to follow but allow them to use their imaginations.

Two-year-olds begin to build by stacking and lining up the blocks. Gradually, they learn to construct different forms. By adding one or two blocks on her construction and suggesting it is a window, a bridge or a railway, you can help your child extend her imagination.

★ Some children may have problem accepting the texture of dough, clay or sand on first contact. Give your child time and encouragement to get used to them. She will explore the change in form by kneading, rolling, pounding and pressing. Provide her with different tools like bucket, spade, containers or moulds of different shapes to create her own masterpieces.



- ★ The creations of young children may look like a mess to you. If your child tells you her creation stands for certain object, appreciate her imagination with enthusiasm. Demanding her to follow your instructions or shaming her will not encourage but do harm to her creativity.

Pretend Play

Why pretend play?

Pretend play reflects what a child sees and hears going on around him in his everyday social and cultural context. It enables the child:



- ★ **To make sense of the world and learn to put seemingly random events into a meaningful sequence** – For instance, your child may first pretend to go shopping by carrying a bag and walking around. Gradually, he understands the events of picking goods from the shelves, paying, and writing down a shopping list are all parts of the shopping sequence.

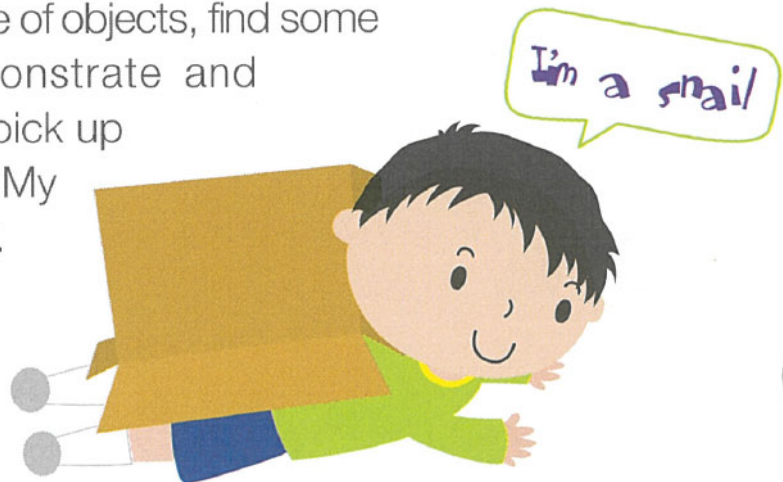


- ★ **To develop language and social skills** – Children learn to describe in words their imaginative experiences or the role of someone else they are adopting. As children play different roles together, they learn to communicate their ideas, cooperate, take turns and compromise.

- ★ **To express emotions** – Children may play out frightening events repeatedly and from which they learn to cope with their fears. Imagination also helps defeat feelings of loneliness and insecurity. A child can imagine his favourite toy as his companion whom he can talk to.

What to use?

- ★ Commercial toys like cooking set, tea set, dolls, stuffed toys, play house, farm, garage, toy cars, aeroplanes, etc.
- ★ Other objects like old clothes, old grownup shoes and socks, bracelets, necklaces, belts, handbags, cloth or paper carrier bags, briefcases, cartons big enough for hiding in, assorted containers, blankets, notebooks, paper and pencils, etc. Basically anything that is child-proof can be used in imaginative play.
- ★ If your child does not play with a toy according to its common usage, like pretending a pan to be a hat and put it on her head, do not intervene because imagination should not have limits. Your support and encouragement helps elaborate her imagination. If you are concerned she might have confused the use of objects, find some other time to demonstrate and suggest to her, e.g. pick up the pan and tell her, 'My little girl is hungry. Mummy is going to cook for her.'



What can you do?

- ★ Apart from providing things to play with and safe spaces for your child, your participation in his play is important.

- ★ Stay nearby or join in your child's play. Let him take the lead as long as it is safe.
- ★ Be enthusiastic. Respond and praise his ideas.
- ★ Make suggestions to him at times to add new ideas and help him make sense of the sequence of events.
- ★ Only suggest experiences familiar to him so that he can imagine.



Other Creative Activities

- Water play in bath tub or with a basin
- Creating dance steps
- Creating music with toy musical instruments or things that make sounds
- Making up lyrics to create new songs
- Making up stories
- Making up jokes
- Thinking of as many uses of an item as possible



- Creating new rules in games
- Guiding your child to appreciate nature and artworks
- Using household objects in pretend play, e.g. cushions can be used for building a house or a tunnel, yachting, horse riding, serving dinner, etc
- Creative activities are never exhaustive.



Set a good example of being creative for your child by showing your humour in daily living and being flexible in problem solving. Do help your child extend and explore his own creativity by imagining and creating with him. Your support to your child is essential in developing creativity.



Family Health Service

Website: www.fhs.gov.hk

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