

How to follow your child's play

All children play- it is an instinct they are born with. Play can take on various forms from simple passing of toys to acting out fantasy play. Play is important for language development. You can help your child's play develop by joining in, offering appropriate toys and reacting when he wants to involve you.

Watch what your child is doing for a few minutes. Sit alongside them and get down to their level. Try to join in with what they are playing with or imitate their play alongside them to show you are interested

For example if your child is playing with cars: start playing with them by getting another car and driving it alongside whilst making funny sounds (e.g. weee, vroom, beep beep, eek.

Respond to talking attempts even if they are not clear- Always model the correct word back but don't force your child to say it.

If your child does not have words yet respond to their gestures and sounds they make and again model the real words to them.

- If your child is using some words already try expanding on these words. For example, if they say "car" whilst rolling the car down the ramp, you can comment by saying " car rolling " try and keep language simple and relevant.
- It is ok to add to their play. So after the they have rolled the car down the ramp a few more times move their play on for them for example; Introduce rolling cars in the paint to make marks, add blocks to make bridges for the car
- However, if your child decides she would rather continue to roll it down the ramp or move onto another activity this okay too.

Other examples if you child is interest in...

- Farm animals – Model the sounds the different animal makes, add the animals in a tray with hay, straw, oats etc for a sensory experience

- Dolls - Add props to support pretend play eg bowl, cup, spoon, blanket or take the doll with you to the park or the shop to extend their interest outside the home
- Some children take a while to 'let you in' to their play. Continue to play alongside and show that you enjoy the play too- eventually they will start to join you, it might just take time.