
A Letter to Families About Dramatic Play

Dear Families,

Dramatic play is one of the ways children gain a better understanding of their experiences. In dramatic play, children take on different roles, act out real or imaginary situations, use props to make believe, and work together. They learn to cooperate with others, solve problems, and control their own behavior—all of which are important skills for school success. When children pretend, they recall experiences and agree on how to re-create them. To play the role of a doctor, they have to remember what a doctor does, what tools a doctor uses, how a doctor examines a patient, and what a doctor might say.

Every day, I play games like peek-a-boo with the babies and encourage them to imitate simple actions. I make believe with toddlers and twos as they play with dolls, push cars along the floor, or pretend to be a cat. I observe the preschool children to see what interests them, and I provide simple props related to topics they are talking about. Sometimes I join in their play without taking over. We all enjoy the plays and puppet shows our school-age children plan and put on for us.

Because dramatic play can take place anywhere and at any time, you probably already encourage this type of play at home. The simple imitation games you play with your baby while changing a diaper or during bath time are two examples. Soon your child learns to pretend to be a noisy puppy, a mommy or daddy caring for a baby, or a firefighter putting out fire. Dramatic play becomes much more complex as your child gains more experience and develops skills to pretend.

Here are some ways to support your child's dramatic play:

- **Talk about real-life experiences as they take place.** On a trip to the grocery store, post office, or clinic, talk about what is happening. Explain what people are doing, their jobs, and the names of tools and other objects they use. This helps your child understand and recall those experiences in pretend play.
- **Provide props that inspire pretend play.** Dolls, doll blankets, a cradle, telephones, pots, pans, plastic dishes, and safe tools will encourage your child to explore social roles. Other useful props include people and animal figurines; transportation toys such as cars, trucks, and boats; and various ride-on toys.
- **Make believe with your child.** This is one of the best ways to encourage your child to pretend. You can also encourage pretend play by asking questions; providing dress-up clothes and work-related props such as firefighter hats, work gloves, and a toy stethoscope; and taking on a role, yourself.
- **Encourage your school-age child's imaginative play.** Your child might enjoy creating plays and acting them out, or using puppets to retell a story.

Sincerely,

Copyright © 2009 by Teaching Strategies, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without prior written permission from Teaching Strategies, Inc., except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

The publisher and the authors cannot be held responsible for injury, mishap, or damages incurred during the use of or because of the information in this book. The authors recommend appropriate and reasonable supervision at all times based on the age and capability of each child.