

Play

Play is anything that a child enjoys doing. This is different for every child. A child might enjoy exploring objects, construction or pretend play. Play is how children begin to understand and explore the world. It is the foundation for learning, communicating and socialising. Children learn best when something is fun and interesting for them. It gives them something to communicate about. Children's play becomes more complex as they develop.

Some children might need some extra help with this area of communication. If a child finds this tricky, they might be more content exploring things on their own. They may find it a bit frustrating when you join in.

Here are our **five top tips** to help a child with their play skills:

1. Have some special time to play together each day

Spend five minutes everyday playing together. This gives the child lots of chance to become more comfortable playing with someone else.

2. Start by noticing what the child finds fun (might not be playing "properly")

Watch what the child is doing so you know what interests them and what they like. Let them choose what to play with and how to play with it. Children learn best when they are having fun, so the more they enjoy the play, the more they will learn. It doesn't matter if they are not using toys "properly". The important thing is you are having fun together!

3. Get down to the same level and copy

If the child is playing on the floor, get down with them so that you are face to face. Move around with them if you need to. This will show them that you want to play. If the child hasn't started talking yet they will still be communicating with you. Being at their level will make it easier for you to notice the different ways they do this. They may be looking at something, pointing, tugging, making a noise, smiling or frowning. Respond to them by copying what they are doing to encourage more communication.

4. Try little turn taking sequences with favourite activities

Communication involves listening, waiting and taking turns. Children learn to take turns in play before taking turns in conversations. You could try taking turns rolling a ball, turning pages in a book or building a tower of bricks. Help by saying *it's "my turn" or "your turn."*

5. Play people games

You don't always need toys to play. Simple games like Peek-a-boo and tickling games are fun to play together. If you pause before saying boo or tickling, you will help the child learn to watch and wait. After a few goes, they will might start to expect what happens next.



**You can check out our video talking about our five top tips to help play.
Scan the QR code.**