

Pretend play

When children do pretend play they are learning:

- About themselves, their families, and the world around them.
- To work and get along with others.
- To plan as they choose what they are going to do and gather the things they need for their play.
- About feelings as they act out times they have found to be upsetting or hard to understand.
- To try out new ideas and work to solve problems.
- To think about the way others act, think, and feel.
- To express emotion by acting the part in the play.
- To communicate with words and their actions.
- To develop creativity and imagination.

Children learn about people and the world when they do pretend play.

Engage in pretend play with children and introduce new words into play.

Children begin pretend play around one year of age. You'll see them pick up a telephone and pretend to talk, hold and feed a doll, or stir pretend food in a dish. At this young age, children need to have toys that look like the real things to be able to play.



As children get older, they'll be able to use their imaginations to make one thing stand for another. You might see a child use some blocks for food or as doctor's tools.

Around ages three or four, you'll see children begin to pretend as they play together.

A housekeeping area is a great beginning for children to use for pretend play. Try asking parents to donate things for the play area or watch for these things at yard sales and thrift stores.

- Dress-up shoes, hats, boots
- Costume jewelry
- Neckties
- Scarves
- Bags of all kinds — tote bags, paper bags, suitcases, briefcases, backpacks, purses
- Wallets
- Keys
- Play money
- Male and female dolls
- Telephone / cellphone (a real one that is broken is neat!)
- Blankets for dolls
- Clean, empty food containers
- Pots and pans
- Plates, forks, cups, and spoons
- Dish towels
- Keyboard
- Calculator

Different play materials can give the children new ideas for pretend play.

More ideas for pretend play

Restaurant

Have play dishes, cups, knives, forks, and spoons or use paper plates, paper cups, and plastic knives, spoons, and forks. The children could use plastic play food or ask parents to bring old magazines for the children to cut out pictures of food to serve. Have paper to make placemats, menus, signs, and to write down orders. A cash register and play money will add to the play.



Grocery store

Give the children clean, empty food containers to stock the shelves in the store. A toy cash register, shopping cart, and play money would add to the play. Don't forget some paper or reusable shopping bags, grocery store ads from the

newspaper, pencils and paper to make shopping lists, and stickers or paper and tape to put prices on the food to be sold. You might want to talk with a local grocery store to see if they will give you some food posters they are no longer using.

Doctor or veterinarian's office

If you don't have a toy doctor's kit, try to get an old set of headphones and attach a block to them with yarn to make a stethoscope. Cut a drinking straw in half to make a syringe to give shots. A long sleeve white shirt makes a great lab coat. Some old file folders or paper on a clip board could be used for health charts. Don't forget a waiting room with some magazines.

Camping

For a camping trip indoors have an easy to set up pop-up type tent, pretend campfire (could be made out of red construction paper) circle of rocks, chairs, pots and pans, flashlights, sleeping bags, radio, books and a deck of cards.

Other themes for pretend play:

Library

Post office

Coffee shop

Travel (airplane, bus, train)

Gas station

Car wash

Community services (police, fire fighters, construction workers)

Field trip sites (zoo, farm, museum)

Children can help develop a list of props or items needed for each new pretend play theme. The teacher can start by asking, "What types of things would you find at the library?" Children, as well as adults, can have fun coming up with a name for the new theme, such as "Big Kids County Library," and making signs for the play area.