

## Support for Speech Language and Communication Needs: Developing play skills

Play is a window to children's thinking. It helps them learn about what is around them and how things work. It is also an important part of language and social skill development- until children can pretend in play they will not fully grasp language use. As children develop, they move through different stages of play, from initially exploring by touching and putting them in their mouths to using their imagination and playing together with their peers:

Exploratory Play ⇨

*touching, tasting, feeling*

Relational Play ⇨

*throwing, stacking, filling, emptying*

Pretend Play ⇨

*acting out everyday actions*

Imaginative Play ⇨

*making up stories and scenes*

**Scaffolding Play-** observe what kind of play the child is already doing and think about what the next step could be.

**Now you can:**

Copy what the child does ↻

Wait until they show you they are interested in what you are doing (usually by looking) ↻

Show them a new idea ↻

*For example, if a child is feeding a dolly, do the same alongside them then pretend to put your dolly to bed*

Use simple language to describe what is happening ↻

*e.g. "sleep time dolly"*

Pause to give the child time to respond -they may watch or try to copy

**Repeat!**

