



Teach Me To Talk!

Helping Parents and Professionals Teach Toddlers To Understand and Use Language

Instructions

Determine a child's current level of play and begin with activities there or at the next developmental stage. To help you do that, here is a chart summarizing the stages of play for toddlers linked with a child's communication skills. As you can see, play development is closely linked to a child's language development. From The Autism Workbook from teachmetotalk.com.

The Autism Workbook... Stages of Play

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Stages of Play	Age	During this stage, play consists of...	Communication Skills
Exploratory Play	Begins early and continues to 8 months	Sensory and motor exploration of toys and objects. A baby looks at, reaches for, grasps, and mouths items.	Babies learn to interact with others as they begin to shift and share attention between people and objects, take turns, and develop a longer attention span.
Nonfunctional Play	Begins at 8 to 12 months	Activities with toys and objects that support important cognitive concepts. Mouthing decreases and new actions with objects emerge, including banging, patting, turning, throwing, etc.	Joint attention with showing/giving objects is noted in play with others. Communicative intent and gestures emerge. Child may use a few words for very specific contexts.
Beginning Functional Play	Begins at 12 to 15 months	Learning to use familiar toys and objects for their intended purpose. Toddlers discover how objects work through trial and error. They use adults during play to help them operate toys or to get attention.	Toddlers use context-dependent single words to request, command, protest, label, respond, and greet, plus other social and personal words.
Early Symbolic Play	Begins around 17 to 18 months	Early pretending as a child begins to use one toy to represent something else during play based on familiar, everyday activities they perform.	A child uses single words with even more variability in the function, form, and content.
Combining Play Actions with Familiar Routines	Begins at 19 to 22 months	Performing several different actions with toys, based on everyday activities he may see other people do.	Children begin to combine words using early phrase patterns.
Expanding Play Routines	Begins at 24 to 30 months	Pretending now includes more steps and less frequent activities.	Toddlers use short phrases and sentences with emerging grammar. Child asks and answers "wh" questions.
Early Role Play and Games with Rules	Begins at 36 months	True pretending as a child takes on another role, changes endings for play, and also begins to play and pretend with peers.	Child speaks in sentences with more complex constructions.