

# DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY



*Play develops in a particular sequence with expected play behaviours to emerge at certain ages. Play and language development are closely linked, particularly in the first five years of life.*

PLAY TYPE	AGE (years)	BEHAVIOUR
Self Play	1 – 1.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause and effect play</li> <li>• Imitates simple one-step actions in pretend (e.g., brush hair, feed baby)</li> <li>• Manipulates objects during play</li> <li>• Very rapid shifts of attention and high movement levels</li> </ul>
Onlooker Play	1.5 – 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plays near others but not with them</li> <li>• Talks to self while playing</li> <li>• Very short turn-taking episodes during play</li> <li>• Begins to combine a simple play sequence (e.g., feed baby bottle and put her in crib to bed)</li> <li>• Imitates novel actions with objects during play</li> <li>• Sensory play very appealing at this age</li> </ul>
Parallel Play	2 – 2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arranges objects to be used in pretend play sequences (e.g., toy cow put near barn and other animals)</li> <li>• Uses own experiences to create pretend play schemes</li> <li>• Stacks blocks into tower</li> <li>• Exploration of materials and the environment during play</li> <li>• Imitates sounds and words during play routines</li> </ul>
Parallel Play	2.5 – 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make believe and imagination begin to enter play routines</li> <li>• Takes an interest in the play of others</li> <li>• Able to take a few back and forth turns during play</li> <li>• Combines various materials in play routines</li> </ul>
Associative Play	3 – 3.5 y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds simple structures from a model</li> <li>• Begins to use writing materials appropriately in play (e.g., scribble on paper, paint on canvas)</li> <li>• Begins to learn to share during play</li> <li>• Re-enacts favourite events during pretend play routines (e.g., baking cookies with grandma, trip to the farm)</li> <li>• Uses one object to represent another (e.g., a stick becomes a magic wand)</li> </ul>
Associative Play	3.5 – 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dramatization and imagination increase significantly</li> <li>• Able to play for longer periods with peers</li> <li>• Directs others in play routines</li> <li>• Play begins to incorporate jokes and silliness</li> </ul>
Associative Play	4 – 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to build more complex structures from a model</li> <li>• Dramatization includes props, characters and can include other peers</li> <li>• Can retell familiar stories in play (e.g., Three Little Pigs acted out with puppets)</li> <li>• Can play in a variety of ways (e.g., alone, with a peer or in small groups)</li> </ul>
Cooperative Play	5 – 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can copy simple drawings</li> <li>• Builds from a model or creates large structures independently</li> <li>• Able to play rule-based games (e.g., tag, hide and seek, board games)</li> <li>• Builds many sequences of events, props, characters and settings into pretend play schemes</li> <li>• Dramatizations can continue across many days</li> </ul>