



What is Pretend Play?

Pretend play has many other names like: imaginative play, creative play, make-believe play.

Examples of pretend play are: being superheroes, playing 'mummies and daddies', playing shopping, dress-ups, having cups of tea with a doll and playing trucks.

Pretend play begins by 18 months (for most children) and starts to change any time from 10 to 12 years. Children at 4 years old children play out a play scene over several days.

When children are playing pretend they are creating a situation where there is more going on than you can see. For example, a child might be feeding a doll and then lying the doll in a bed - but to the child, the doll is alive and really drinking (and it might burp) and the doll is really sleeping.

Pretend play is a thinking skill. There are 3 thinking skills that are important for pretending. These are:

- Children use objects as something else (for example, the box is a bed),
- Children attribute properties to objects (for example, the tea is 'hot' or the teddy is 'sleeping' or the truck is 'fast'); and
- Children refer to invisible objects (for example, there is a door in a certain space, or there is dog near the doll (but the dog is invisible)).

Pretend play also involves

- Playing with an object as if that object is alive - for example, the teddy to the child is a living, breathing being that talks to them.
- Playing a character. For example, a child might play a shopkeeper, or being a mother, or a doctor.
- Playing out a story that is logical and sequential. For example, if there is a problem (for example, I can't find the keys to the car), then they need to solve it (for example, look everywhere for the keys, or walk the doll to the shops instead of driving in the car or ask another doll to drive them).

