

Information on

Child-Initiated Pretend Play Assessment (Karen Stagnitti, 2007)

The Child-Initiated Pretend Play Assessment (ChIPPA) is a norm referenced standardised assessment of the quality of a child's ability to self-initiate pretend play. It can be used by health professionals or early childhood educators who have successfully completed tertiary education to at least the level of a Bachelor Degree.

The age range is 3 years to 7 years 11 months. There are boy and girl norms for some of the age ranges. The ChIPPA takes 18 minutes to administer to 3 year olds and 30 minutes to administer to children from 4 years to 7 years 11 months.

The ChIPPA measures the elaborateness of a child's play (that is, how complex and organised the play is), the ability of a child to use symbols in play, and if a child relies on someone else for play ideas. These items are called: Percentage of Elaborate Pretend Play Actions (elaborate play), Number of Object Substitutions (use of symbols in play), and Number of Imitated Actions (reflection of reliance on a model to play).

The ChIPPA comprises 2 sets of play materials which reflect two aspects of pretend play: conventional-imaginative play using a set of toys and symbolic play using a set of unstructured play materials. The play materials were chosen based on gender neutrality and developmental appropriateness (see play publication list for reference to Stagnitti, Rodger, & Clarke, 1997).

In the ChIPPA you are supplied with: all the play materials and toys, stopwatch, sheet, manual on CD, scoring booklet on CD, and an Instructional DVD (74 minutes). Also supplied are scoring sheets for 3 year olds and scoring sheets for 4 – 7.11 year olds. The ChIPPA comes in a box and is available from www.therapybookshop.com

ChIPPA workshops are carried out over 2 to 3 days.



Play materials of the ChIPPA for 4 years to 7 years 11 months

The play materials of the ChIPPA were based on a study to determine gender neutrality and developmentally appropriateness. I have used the ChIPPA in 7 countries and to date, no changes have been made to the play materials except for the Australian Aboriginal children who live remotely. (See play publication list for Pfeifer et al., 2011 for use in Brazil and Dender & Stagnitti, 2011 for the play material changes for the Indigenous ChIPPA.) In my experience in using the ChIPPA with hundreds of children, no child has had difficulty recognising the toys as toys. It was important in the development of the ChIPPA to have play materials: that were easily recognisable by children; that were not 'fad' toys eg, character toys from a current TV series or movie; that were gender neutral; that were developmentally appropriate; and were culturally appropriate. Many people ask me about urban children playing with what looks like a farm set. In my experience, urban children have not had difficulty in recognising the toys for the conventional-imaginative play set and many have similar toys at home (for example, animals, dolls and vehicles). I have encountered one child, who lived on a dairy farm, who asked for other toys and when I said that was all I had, he continued to play with the toys without difficulty.

The children aged 4 years and over prefer toys that look like they belong together. The 3 year olds were not so fussy in their choice of toys. The wooden toys are especially made for the ChIPPA.



Unstructured objects for 4-7.11 years
Symbolic play session



Play materials for 4-7.11 years
Conventional-imaginative play session

The play materials for the 3 year olds were also chosen based on a study exploring gender neutrality and developmental appropriateness. The play materials for this age group also come with the ChIPPA and include a large truck and trailer, slightly larger dolls and animals and a small tea-set.

Administration of the ChIPPA

To administer the ChIPPA, a play space is created by making a 'cubby house' (Australian term). A 'cubby house' is made of 2 adult chairs with a sheet thrown over them (see picture below). In the United Kingdom, a 'cubby house' is called a 'wendy house' or a 'house', in Canada it is either a 'fort' or a 'tent' or a 'house'. The sheet is supplied in the ChIPPA kit. The examiner and child sit on the floor in front of the cubby.

In Australia, a 'cubby house' is a space to play in; it is a safe place and usually means 'serious play'.

The ChIPPA has two sets of play materials because two aspects of pretend play are assessed – conventional-imaginative play and symbolic play. For 3 year olds, the ChIPPA is divided into play 2 sessions with 9 minutes assessing conventional-imaginative play and 9 minutes examining symbolic play. Most 3 years olds are ready to stop playing at 18 minutes. For 4 year olds to 7 year 11 month old children, the 30 minute session is divided into 2 x 15 minute sessions, with one 15 minute session being assessment of conventional-imaginative play using the toys, and one 15 minute session being assessment of symbolic play using the unstructured play materials. Children who are competent players can play for longer than 30 minutes but most children are ready to finish at 30 minutes.

For 4 - 7.11 year old children, each 15 minute session is divided into 3 x 5 minute segments. In the first 5 minutes the child is invited to play with the toys or play materials with no other directions given. In the second 5 minutes, the examiner models 5 play actions (these are set actions), as often as the examiner can without disrupting the child's play. In the last 5 minutes, the examiner stops modelling any play actions and the child is encouraged to continue playing. At no point are any ideas on what or how to play given. The ChIPPA is aimed to gather information on a child's ability to self-initiate their own play. The examiner is passive during a ChIPPA assessment with interactions being responding to the child or encouraging the child to continue engaging with the toys or play materials.



Scoring of the ChIPPA

The ChIPPA can be scored as the child plays, but this takes practice. It is recommended that the first 10 ChIPPA assessments you do be recorded.

Three items are scored: the child's percentage of elaborate play to total actions; the child's object substitutions and if the child imitated the examiner in the middle segment of each play session. These items are scored for each play session as well as a total score calculated. This means that 9 scores can be calculated from the ChIPPA assessment and each of these scores can be compared to a norm score, or a percentile rank or the expected range. There is also a clinical observations sheet for the ChIPPA. On the Clinical Observations sheet the examiner indicates whether the items were performed as typical indicators of play or deficit indicators of play.

The score sheet is geared towards use in clinical practice with symbols used on the score sheet to indicate the level of play ability for each action, play actions that were imitated, play actions that were deferred imitation and play actions that referred to absent objects or property attributions.

The next page has a sample of a score sheet for a young 4 year old boy who has poor play ability for his age. To understand the scoring on 'Joe's' score sheet:

1. Each action of the child is scored either: B (behavioural actions, which on the ChIPPA are non-play actions, such as rolling around the floor, throwing the play materials without any play purpose, not engaging with the play materials); f (functional actions, which are single actions using the play materials functionally, for example, standing up an animal, pushing the truck, placing objects together); e (elaborate actions which are functional actions that are used in a sequence or actions which build on each other, such that the play is organised, coherent, there is a narrative or the play is logical and sequential); R(repetitive actions where the child repeats play actions to the point where the child is 'stuck' in the play or the play is not being extended, for example, lining up all the animals continually without any overriding story or purpose).
2. Joe has many B's and R's on his score sheet in both sessions, indicating that he is using many non-play actions and his play is repetitive. His play is not organised and there would be no clear narrative or plan to his play. In both sessions he has many B's at the beginning of the play session, indicating that he does not easily initiate his play. At the end of both sessions he also has many B's and R's indicating that he is having difficulty extending his play, thinking of what to play and finds 15 minutes play with each session a long time. In fact, in the symbolic play session he cannot play for 15 minutes. This is below the level of play ability expected for a young 4 year old boy.
3. Ticks (or checks) on the score sheet mean the child has imitated an action of the examiner. A score of '4' on Joe's conventional-imaginative score sheet indicates that he is imitating actions more than expected for his age. Children who score high numbers of imitated actions than expected for their age usually have difficulty initiating play ideas. Downward arrows also indicate that Joe relied on the examiner's play actions, by using them later in the play.
4. If a child cannot finish the time, this is noted on the play sheet. Joe had difficulty completing the time in symbolic play. This is a play deficit on the Clinical Observations form.

'Joe Bloggs' (the case on the next page) is not a real person but rather Joe's score sheet is a composite of the score sheets of many children who were referred with concerns for their development expressed by parents, other health professionals or preschool teachers.

Joe's Conventional –imaginative play session

Play Action Codes:
 B = non-play action, child is not engaged with the play materials
 R = repeats a series of actions or action more than twice.
 Third time, child is scored 'R'
 f = functional actions are when the play materials are used functionally
 e = elaborate actions are functional actions used in a logical sequence

Advanced Scoring
 ê = verbally attributes properties, refers to absent objects
 ↓ = deferred imitation

Object Substitution
 Record the number of objects used in object substitution

Imitative Action
 Tick the box when the child imitates the therapist.
 The play action is left blank

CONVENTIONAL IMAGINATIVE SESSION CHILD INITIATED PRETEND PLAY ASSESSMENT (ChIPPA) (4-7 years)

First FIVE minutes (0 - 5 minutes)

(Top row - play action code; Bottom row - object substitution record)

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(Top row - play action code; Bottom row - object substitution record)

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(Top row - play action code; Bottom row - object substitution record)

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Second FIVE minutes (6 - 10 minutes)

(Top row - play action code; Middle row - object substitution record; Third row - tick for imitative action, corresponding action box should be left blank)

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(Top row - play action code; Middle row - object substitution record; Third row - tick for imitative action, corresponding action box should be left blank)

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| R | f | B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Final FIVE minutes (11 - 15 minutes)

(Top row - play action code; Bottom row - object substitution record)

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Child's Name: Joe Bloggs

Date of Assessment: 97-6-7

Date of Birth: 93-1-12

Age of Child: 4yrs 4m 15days

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Joe's Symbolic play session

Play Action Codes:
 B = non-play action, child is not engaged with the play materials
 R = repeats a series of actions or action more than twice.
 Third time, child is scored 'R'
 f = functional actions are when the play materials are used functionally
 e = elaborate actions are functional actions used in a logical sequence

Advanced Scoring
 ê = verbally attributes properties, refers to absent objects
 ↓ = deferred imitation

Object Substitution
 Record the number of objects used in object substitution

Imitative Action
 Tick the box when the child imitates the therapist.
 The play action is left blank

SYMBOLIC PLAY SESSION CHILD INITIATED PRETEND PLAY ASSESSMENT (ChIPPA) (4-7 years)

First FIVE minutes (0 - 5 minutes)

(Top row - play action code; Bottom row - object substitution record)

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| B | B | B | B | B | B | f | f | f | B | B | B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Second FIVE minutes (6 - 10 minutes)

(Top row - play action code; Middle row - object substitution record; Third row - tick for imitative action, corresponding action box should be left blank)

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(Top row - play action code; Middle row - object substitution record; Third row - tick for imitative action, corresponding action box should be left blank)

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Final FIVE minutes (11 - 15 minutes)

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| f | f | B | B | B | R | R | R | R | R | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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Child's Name: Joe Bloggs

Date of Assessment: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Age of Child: _____

Calculation of scores

The total number of actions are added up, then the number of elaborate actions are added up, then a percentage is calculated. The number of object substitutions are added up, the number of imitated actions are added (that is, the number of ticks on the page). These raw scores are transferred to the score summary and Joe's scores can then be compared to the norm scores for his age and gender. The scores indicate that Joe is more than 2 standard deviations below the mean in his ability to engage in play for his age. Joe requires intervention as he is significantly delayed in his play.

Children who present with this type of play result on the ChIPPA have difficulties in all or some of the following: poor ability to engage with peers in play; language ability lower than expected for age; lower levels of self-regulation than expected for age; needing direction by adults in times of 'free' play such as playing in a sand-pit; disrupting the play of peers; not understanding how to act in different social contexts.

SCORING

| Conventional-imaginative play session | Symbolic play session |
|--|---|
| PEPA Score calculation | PEPA Score calculation |
| Percentage of Elaborate Pretend Play Actions score calculation: | Percentage of Elaborate Pretend Play Actions score calculation: |
| Total Actions = 103 | Total Actions = 52 |
| Elaborate actions = 30 | Elaborate actions = 0 |
| Percentage = $\frac{\text{elaborate actions} \times 100}{\text{total actions}} = \frac{30 \times 100}{103} = 29.1$ | Percentage = $\frac{\text{elaborate actions} \times 100}{\text{total actions}} = \frac{0 \times 100}{52} = 0$ |
| Percentage of elaborate pretend play (PEPA): 29% | Percentage of elaborate pretend play (PEPA): 0% |
| Number of object substitutions (NOS): 0 | Number of object substitutions (NOS): 1 |
| Number of imitative actions score (NIA): 4 | Number of imitative actions score (NIA): 2 |

SCORE SUMMARY FOR ChIPPA ASSESSMENT

Child's Name: _____

| | Raw Score | Standard Score | Percentile |
|---|-----------|----------------|------------|
| PEPA conventional (conventional imaginative play) | 29 | -2.23 | |
| PEPA symbolic | 0 | -2.28 | |
| PEPA combined (PEPA conventional + PEPA symbolic) | 29 | -2.68 | |
| NOS (conventional imaginative play) | 0 | * | |
| NOS symbolic | 1 | -1.24 | 5% |
| NOS combined (NOS conventional + NOS symbolic) | 1 | -1.27 | 5% |
| NIA (conventional imaginative play) | 4 | * 0-2 | <5% |
| NIA symbolic | 2 | * 0-2 | 25% |
| NIA combined (NIA conventional + NIA symbolic) | 6 | * 0-2 | 5% |

* Enter range

Recommendations

Joe scores below the range of play expected for a child his age. With conventional imaginative play his play becomes repetitive and he did rely on the examiner for play ideas (as evidenced by the downward arrows on the score sheet). He found it difficult to expand his play and his play theme consisted of placing the animals in the truck and driving them and then placing some of them on the floor. Joe had more difficulty playing in the symbolic play session. His play was experimental with manipulation of objects. He did not use any symbols in play and there was not evidence of a coherent organised storyline. Overall, Joe's play style is like the Imitator Play Style because his Number of Imitated Actions is above the range expected and he has PEPA scores below his age range and NOS scores below his age range on the Symbolic Play session.

Joe would benefit from play therapy intervention.

Sample of an earlier version of the Clinical Observations form showing Joe has more Indicators of play deficits than typical indicators of play.

Clinical Observations
Child-Initiated Pretend Play Assessment
 Children aged 4 – 7 years

Child's Name: Joe

Note:

CI = conventional functional play session

S = symbolic play session

Where these symbols appear, please circle the relevant sessions.

| Observation | Indicators of typical play | Indicators of play deficit | Comments |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Time | | | |
| The child finishes each segment of play (i.e. each 3 or 5 minute segment). | Yes | No | |
| If NO to above, answer the following: | | | |
| The child finishes more than 4 minutes early. | No | Yes | |
| Child completes the conventional-functional section. | Yes | No | |
| Child completes the symbolic section. | Yes | No | |
| The child completes the first 5 minute segment of 15 minutes. | Yes | No CI S | |
| The child completes the final 5 minute segment of 15 minutes. | Yes | No CI S | |
| The child consistently uses developmentally young play themes. For example, the child only uses simple domestic themes in a repetitive manner. | No | Yes | |
| The child shows evidence of play themes in the: Conventional functional play session | Yes | No | |
| Symbolic play session | Yes | No | |
| The child emotionally engages the examiner during the play sessions. | Yes | No | |
| The child copies modelled actions to the extinction of the child's own ideas. (Note: the score sheet should have several arrows and/or imitated actions). | No | Yes | The child struggles to initiate own play ideas. |
| The child extends the play. | Yes | No | |
| Child initiates pretend play ideas before the modelling segment. | Yes | No CI S | |
| The child asks what to do several times. | No | Yes | |
| The child develops a play story after setting up a scene (e.g., setting up a farm scene). | Yes | No | |
| The child has a narrative in the conventional functional play session. | Yes | No | |

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| | | | |
|---|--|--|----------------------|
| The child has a narrative in the symbolic play session. | Yes | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No | |
| The play narrative is in short bursts (i.e., there is never more than a string of 4 'e's). | No | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes CI S | |
| The child uses templates for stories during the play. For example, the child 'recites' a section of a story from Thomas the Tank. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No | Yes CI S | |
| The child uses the doll as an active participant in play. | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes | No | Used doll in CI only |
| There evidence of reference to absent objects. There is evidence of reference to property attributes. | Yes Yes | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No <input checked="" type="radio"/> No | |
| The child brings in toys from the other set of play materials. Circle the relevant observation | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No not at all Yes Unstructured objects brought to CI. | Yes Toy set is brought in with objects from S. | |
| The child talks about the play throughout the play session. | Yes | <input checked="" type="radio"/> No | |
| PLAY STYLE | | | |
| Not all children will show a play style on the ChIPPA. If the child does show a style, indicate the style of play. This may aid intervention planning. | | | |
| Which profile would best describe the child's play (please circle) | | | |
| <u>Typical play profiles</u> | | | |
| Narrative Based Play Profile | | | |
| Engineer Play Profile | | | |
| Experimental Physicist Play Profile | | | |
| The 12" Doll Syndrome Play Profile | | | |
| <u>These profiles indicate a play deficit</u> | | | |
| The Imitator Play Profile | | | |
| The Disorganised Player Play Profile | | | |
| The Symbolic Play Deficit Play Profile. | | | |
| High Fantasy Play Profile | | | |
| Pretend Play Basics Play Profile With Imitation | | | |
| Pretend Play Basics Play Profile | | | |
| Functional Player | | | |
| Imitator Play profile evident as child's scores down in elaborate play and object substitution, and imitated action and deferred imitation is evident. Child scores more than 2 imitated actions over the assessment. Has greater difficulty with symbolic play than conventional imaginative play. | | | |