



The children are home!

Here's some ideas to keep busy minds and bodies busy

Play is learning. Remember that imaginative play or pretend play is thinking play.

Pretend play is thinking play because children need to think of what to play, use an object or objects as play props (using the object as a symbol in play is higher level thinking), incorporate a character in the play (like a teddy or doll), and organise their thinking so the play is organised.

On <https://www.learntoplayevents.com/shop/page/2/> you will find **free books** to download.

“Active Play”. Many of these games can be played indoors as well as outdoors. The calming activities are all indoor activities. To play all these activities you will need:

- mat
- foam wedge or pillow
- rope
- buckets
- bean bag/balls of different sizes
- access to music
- skittles
- markers – use anything such as shoes, saucepans, pieces of paper, rocks, plastic plates
- cardboard boxes
- large pieces of cloth
- a bell or something that makes a noise
- blindfold such as a strip of material
- hoops or objects placed in a circle
- sack or pillowcase or large bag
- blocks or something that could be stacked and knocked over
- goal posts such as 2 chairs or 2 boxes and so on
- quoits

chalk
tambourine or something to hit to make a noise
totem tennis
cylinders or sticks
old paint brushes
torch

“Pretending with Objects” This book has lots of ideas for using objects in play. For example, a piece of cloth could be hair for a doll, a magic cloth for magic tricks, a roof for a building, or stuffed up the arm of a shirt to be muscles.

“Pretending with Objects” has pages of props which can be photocopied and coloured in if needed. If you have a laminator at home, you could also laminate some of the props for use over and over.

“Pre-Writing Activities”. This book has lots of ideas for activities that help hand control and using a pencil.

In this current time of home delivery, keep any boxes that come to your door as these are valuable play materials!

General ideas

- Create your own cubby house. Throw some sheets over a table or a couple of chairs or the end of a bed or lounge chair to create a space to crawl into. Inside your cubby, you could have blankets and cushions and something special to make it yours. If you have brothers or sisters, you could have more than one cubby and visit each other!
- In a basket or tub place a variety of objects such as kitchen utensils, or objects from the garden such as nut shells, flowers, leaves, sticks. Invite your child to explore them – feel them, talk about the colour, shape, and size. For older children you could discuss what each object could be in a play scene.
- Pretend objects can be different things. For example, boxes can be cars, beds, tables, caves, an oven, a house and so on. Cloth can be grass (green coloured cloth), ocean (blue coloured cloth), deserts (fawn coloured cloth), and snow (white cloth). The FREE book – **“Pretending with objects”** will give you more ideas.
- Create spaces where you can join your child in role play. For example, different rooms could be different houses and the children can make letters and then deliver them to different rooms in the house. In each room there is a character waiting for their letters and maybe you will be in one of the rooms. You could

also create a space for a shop, where the children create the products to sell to 'customers' (you!)

- For children who are three years or older, you can create play scenes with props and characters. For example, you might be a superhero with special powers, which the child chooses. For five-year old children or older, you might go for a voyage into space or under the sea!
- Interactive fun. On a smaller scale, try creating playful moments with figurines and small toys where the child can manipulate the toys and have the characters interact with each other.

Apart from boxes, play dough is a flexible play item. Here's a recipe!

Playdough recipe

½ cup salt
1 cup plain flour
2 tablespoons cream of tartar
1 cup water
1 tablespoon oil
2 drops liquid food colouring

Method

Mix all ingredients together in a medium sized saucepan. Stir over heat until dough is pliable. Allow to cool and store in a well-sealed plastic bag or container.

Ideas for specific age groups

For 2-year olds

For 2-year-old children, play out events from the child's daily life. Things that the child is familiar with, within their culture. For example, for most children in Australia, children should have experienced: eating, sleeping, cooking, going in a vehicle, shopping.

- Cup, spoon, teddy or doll: you stir the spoon in the cup and give teddy a drink
- Truck, blocks (or anything that will fit into the truck): put things in the truck and go for a ride. Tip out the blocks and come back for more.
- Cooking. Make food out of play dough (such as round balls). Put in a saucepan and stir. You could use a box for a stove. Put two circles on the bottom of a box as the hot plates. You could use a real saucepan or a toy saucepan.
- Depending on your 2-year-old child's concentration, you might pretend to eat the food you cooked, or give teddy or a doll some food.
- Take a favourite toy for a ride in a box, then turn over the box and put a cup on it and use it as a table
- Put teddy or a favourite toy in a box as a bed, placed a piece of paper over the box as a blanket

- Set up a shop. Depending on the toys you have at home, you could have a teddy shop, food shop, car shop, pet shop. If you don't have a cash register, draw some numbers on a box and use scraps of paper for money. Make the shopping scene simple by choosing something to buy and giving the paper money to the child.

For 3-year olds

3-year-old children can play out ideas from what they know to play ideas that come from their favourite story, TV show, movie or book.

- Play doctors: Teddy or a doll may be sick and needs a bandage (use old strips from rags if you have them or strips of paper).
- A special toy may need rescuing (for example, they may be stuck in a bucket (which is a cave) or they may have fallen over when walking up a mountain (a large cushion or pile of cushions/pillows).
- Posting letters – With your child you write letters (these will be scribble and drawings), post them in a box with a slit, then get a bag and go to the box and collect the letters. The child then delivers them to the 'houses' (you could set up 2 areas where someone lives - could be a teddy or mum or dad).
- Doll's house – the dolls eat, sleep, go out
- Garage – the cars come for petrol, leave, come back to get fixed
- The teddy or dolls dance to music and have a birthday party

For 4-year olds

4-year-old children can play ideas from books, their own life, and can create play scenes and ideas that need a couple of days to finish. If you have a space where they can keep their play scene set up for them to come back to, that will enable your child to develop a more complex story in their play. If you don't, take a photo of their play scene before they pack up, so they can refer to the photo and quickly re-create where they were up to the day before.

- Fishing. Using the fish props from **"Pretending with objects"**, place a paper clip on each fish, put them on a cloth (blue if you have it) and using a magnet on a string, go fishing to catch some fish. You might 'cook' the fish and 'eat' it after fishing.
- Set up coloured materials to create grass area, beach area, ocean area. Have any figurines you might have go to the beach and go for a swim. If you don't have figurines you could use corks, small sticks, pegs as people.
- Provide boxes, glue, sticky take, coloured paper, sticks, anything you have spare that is an interesting shape and invite your child to make something.
- Collect some hats and put in figurines or teddies (whatever you have). The hats are boats and they are going sailing. Encourage your child to add props to the scene such as cloth for ocean. You might have a problem, for example, the wind is strong, and the boats have to get back to shore.
- Set up a cubby house and have a kitchen area, sleeping area and an 'outside' area.

For 5-year olds up to 7-year olds

5 to 7-year-old children can play out ideas over a couple of weeks. They can make up anything in their play.

- Set up several cubby houses. Each cubby house is a different house/shop/doctors/school. Create spaces within the cubbies so that it is clear what each cubby is by the props inside it. Depending on how many children are playing, either each child has a different cubby, or one or two children visit the shop/doctors/school.
- Using a box, create a rocket. Find other objects around the house to go into the rocket. When it is ready, sit in the rocket and fly into space. What did you see? What adventures did you have?
- Using a box, create a submarine. Find other objects around the house to go into the submarine. When it is ready, go into the submarine and dive into the sea. What did you see? Where there any strange creatures? What adventures did you have?
- Collect small sticks, ice cream sticks, or small objects and put them in separate piles. Have trucks come to collect the different items and take them to waiting figurines who need a house to be built or furniture to be made.
- Using cardboard and paper, create your own city. **“Pretending with Objects”** has a prop page for large buildings. Photocopy and colour in and place on a box as a tall building. In your city, you might need a beach, a lighthouse, car parks, playground, tall buildings, shops, streets, trees, and houses.