

Parenting Future Readers

No. 8 (Month 23-24)

Did you know?

Dramatic play helps children practice language. Research shows that toddlers who engage in dramatic or pretend play with others develop larger vocabularies, understand more words and learn to speak in longer sentences.



Did you know?

When parents elaborate on what their toddler says this helps him learn language. **Elaboration** means repeating what your child says, but adding more description and information. When your child says "doggie," you can elaborate by saying, "Yes, he's a black and white doggie with a big, bushy tail."

Did you know?

Reading to your toddler **about the things she experiences** encourages language development. Building on her interests makes reading more meaningful and exciting so she learns more!



What can you do?

Engage in dramatic play with your child. For example, you might act out stories you've read together, or join in any pretend play that interests your toddler.

What can you do?

Ask your child open-ended questions during mealtime, story time, bedtime, etc. Elaborate on what your toddler says. For example, if he says, "Read story" you might respond, "Yes, you can pick out two stories to read before bedtime."

What can you do?

Read books that relate to your child's activities/play/interests. For example, if your family takes a trip on an airplane your toddler may enjoy reading books about airplanes.

Tips for Dramatic Play

❖ **Provide props that encourage literacy in dramatic play:**

paper, old magazines or newspapers, play money, empty food boxes, toy phone, stickers with printed messages, old brochures, etc. In addition, items like blocks, dress-up clothes, plastic containers, boxes of various sizes, tea sets, toy cars, and stuffed animals, help to support pretend play.

❖ **For older toddlers, follow your child's lead in dramatic play.** Join in your child's pretend play, but don't direct the play. Let your child control her make-believe world!

❖ **Add reading and writing to dramatic play.** For example, make an imaginary phone call to ask someone for information and write notes while you're talking. If your child is pretending to go to the restaurant you might look at a piece of paper with writing (or an old menu) and say, "I wonder what good things they have to eat on the menu." See if your child "reads" the menu too.



❖ **For younger toddlers, encourage pretend play by:**

1. *suggesting pretend ideas.* For example, you might suggest your child pretend he is a person or animal from a favorite story or video, and then you pretend to be one of the other characters.
2. *starting the pretend play,* for example, by picking up a stuffed toy dog and pretending to feed the dog and take it for a walk.
3. *supporting your child's pretend play when you observe it.* For example, when you see your child feeding her dolly you might say, "Oh, you're feeding your baby. You're such a good mommy." Or if he is riding his toy horse you might say, "You're riding your horse. Are you going to Grandma's house or the store?"