

# Make Believe, Imagination & Pretending: Ages & Stages

## CHECKLIST



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## At a Glance 0- 2

- Infants will remember much of what they see, hear, and feel - memories they'll re-enact in their later pretend play.
- In their second year, children begin to engage in symbolic play. A doll will represent a baby, and blocks will become a garage or a house.
- More imaginative, fantasy make believe type play, gradually emerges in the pretend play of two year olds.
- Two-year-olds sometimes lose sight of the line between fantasy and reality - even in their own pretend made up games.

## At a Glance 3- 4

- 3 year old's play is often related to their real-life experiences- and usually includes lots of dressing up & props and lots of language exploration.
- In the early stages of peer play, one child often assigns roles to the others - who may find creative ways to make up their own roles.
- Imaginary friends often appear around the age of three - and can play a big role in a child's day-to-day life.
- The pretend play of 4 - year - olds becomes more realistic and detailed.

## **At a Glance 5- 6**

- School aged children have a strong grasp of the difference between real and pretend -- which makes engaging in fantasies all the more enjoyable & fun.
- 5 and 6-year-olds' increased attention spans and awareness of detail enables them to stick with extended play themes for longer periods of time.
- Pretending is really social for young school aged children, and interacting together is half the fun.

## **The Importance Of Play**

Lots of research has shown that brain connections develop during periods of play so it is vital to emotional, physical and intellectual development.

Lots of parents don't always understand the importance of play however, and in today's competitive world, the temptation is to stop your children "wasting time" and to put the time to what they believe is more constructive use.

For a child, however, there is no more constructive activity than play. When analysing the importance of play, particularly if you're tempted to introduce a more "worthwhile" activity such as flash cards, educational computer games or dancing or karate lessons, you should take into account the following points:

- Play allows a young child to be "in charge." Often children are constantly being told what to do and how to do it in their everyday lives, they're small and powerless so play lets them explore their world free from adult interference, without an adult around, they're running the show!

- Play with you shouldn't be underestimated either, as research shows that children whose parents play with them ultimately develop superior social skills.
- Playing with your kids builds up great family memories, bonds you together and makes life fun. It also builds bridges not walls between you and shows you love and care enough about your kids to spend time with them doing fun stuff.
- Playing doesn't have to be hard work, complicated or boring – it can be doing simple and inexpensive things like riding a bike, playing on the swings, playing cards or a board game.
- Play also provides the opportunity for children to work out their feelings. The importance of dealing with difficult or unpleasant emotions is immense. A child who's worried about going to the dentist, for example, may deal with the anxiety by setting up a clinic for dolls with toothache.
- Play helps with language development. Think of the vast number of words a child uses during play, many of them repeatedly, enhancing their language skills.
- Play allows children to grow beyond their years. They can pretend to be all sorts of things in play – a doctor, a surgeon, a teacher, a plumber, a chef, a fire fighter!
- Don't forget to consider the importance of stimulating your child's creativity and imagination – making a castle in the sand, or a car garage out of a shoe box, taking an order in their own (imaginary) café or dressing up as a king or queen – these all allow children to stretch the limits of their world and experience the fun in make-believe.

So never underestimate the importance of play whatever your kid's ages.

