



SPEECH AND LANGUAGE
THERAPY PRACTICE

Teaching Language Skills Through Play: Dolls, Action Figures & Stuffed Animals

In order to promote language development and successful play skills you need to incorporate the following when engaging in play with your child:

- Model language and appropriate play for your child to copy.
- Join your child at play. Your child is more likely to respond if you are engaging with a toy / activity that they are interested in.
- Comment on what you and your child are doing. Your comments should be short and focused on their play.

Below are some ideas you can use when you are playing with dolls, action figures and / or stuffed animals with your child. Pick a couple of ideas that you feel comfortable with and give them a go!

- Before you start, ask your child what they would like to play with, dolls, action figures and / or stuffed animals. Go with the toys your child is most interested in.
- Start by naming the dolls, action figures and / or stuffed animals. Brainstorm with your child where they live, what they like to eat, what sounds they make, and what they like to do.
- Use the dolls, action figures and / or stuffed animals to model pretend play e.g. bathing them, feeding them, changing them, putting them to sleep, and playing with them.
- During pretend play you can target specific vocabulary sets e.g. verbs – run, sleep, jump, eat, drink / nouns – cup, spoon, ball, plate, shoe / descriptive words – wet, messy, stinky, sleepy, clean / and prepositions – in, on, under, top, bottom.
- Provide comments on everything that you and your child are doing e.g. “The baby is tired. I am putting her to sleep. Goodnight baby. Sleep well.”
- If you have two or more types of either, dolls, action figures or stuffed animals, talk about their differences and similarities e.g. “This doll has long hair, but this doll has short hair” “Both the dog and the cow are brown.”

- As your child offers up dialogue to match their play, affirm what they say and then expand upon it e.g. if your child says, “Dog run” you can say “Yes, the dog is running.” This provides your child with complete sentences, correct grammar models and helps to expand their vocabulary.

Check out the other Speak To Me “Teaching Language Skills Through Play” worksheets for more ideas to try at home.