

SEN Early Years Inclusion Service

Play Activities to Support Communication and Interaction



Play

Play is central for young children in developing a wide range of learning and skills.

Play and social development and social interaction are closely linked together.

As a result, children with social communication and interactions difficulties can often find play challenging.

- Follow your child's lead during play, and use what is appropriate to your child's level of communication and readiness to interact.
- Some days your child can play for longer than others. It may be helpful to aim for 5 minutes, but stop when your child is ready to finish. If your child is enjoying the activity, you can probably play for longer.
- Comment on what your child is doing rather than asking questions.
- Keep comments short – describe what is happening e.g. rolling the ball, building the blocks, 'Build, build, build' & 'All fall down'



- Sharing Space and Attention to Items/Activities
- Show your child communication is valuable
- Pause
- Wait for eye contact
- Look for a gesture for 'more'
- Share your child's chosen activity.
- Mirror what your child is doing.
- Build on their interaction in small steps.
- Peek a boo games
- Pulling silly faces

- Blowing raspberries on hand/tummy
- Balloons - blowing up and letting go
- Bubbles
- Jack in a Box type toys
- Guiding your child's hand to your face and make a 'beep beep' sound when they touch your nose



Beep Beep
Beep

Toys

You could organise toys into **themes** and vary what is available to your child. These can be changed after 2-3 weeks.

Include items that are related to the theme, for example books, puzzles, miniature figures, stickers, lotto cards (see templates provided) and colouring pictures.

Themes can include:

- Houses
- [Animals](#)
- [Shapes](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Cooking/food](#)
- [Feelings](#)
- People
- Weather



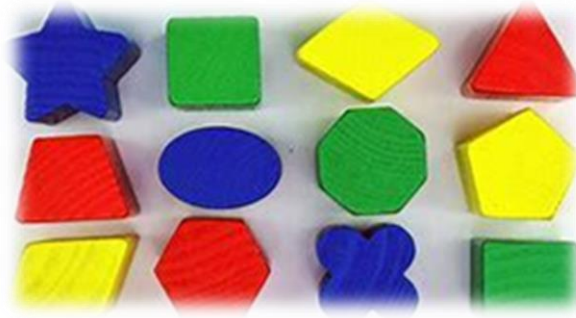
Table Top Games and Puzzles

Here are some ideas and activities for table top games and puzzles that you can choose to play with your child.

Shapes & Colours

- Matching shapes/colours
- Selecting shapes/colours
- Naming shapes/colours
- Shape sorter/colours
- Shape sorter/colours
- Everyday shapes/colours – look for shapes around you

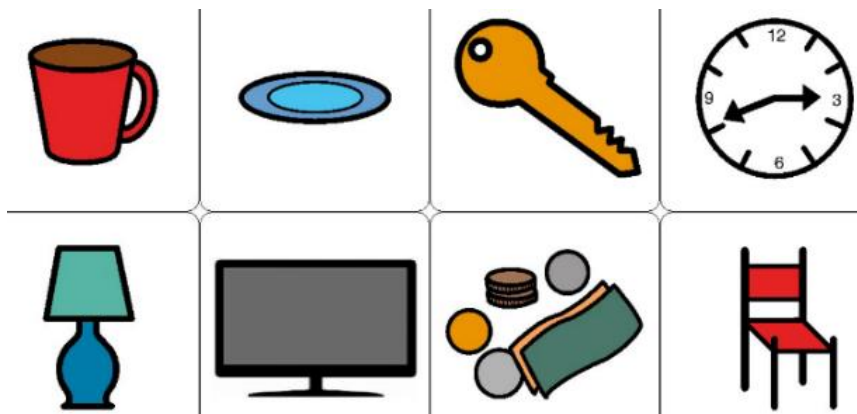
(See [templates](#))



Matching Games

- Matching real objects to pictures
- Matching toy objects to pictures
- Matching [photos](#) to pictures
- Matching [pictures](#) to objects

You may wish to refer to some of the templates we have also provided in this section.



Posting Games

- A posting box can be made out of a shoe box or containers. This can be covered in paper or painted (an activity that can be done with your child). Remember to not seal the lid so items can be retrieved. This can be used for a number of different activities.
- Again, you may wish to refer to the templates provided in the Visuals section.



Simple Puzzles

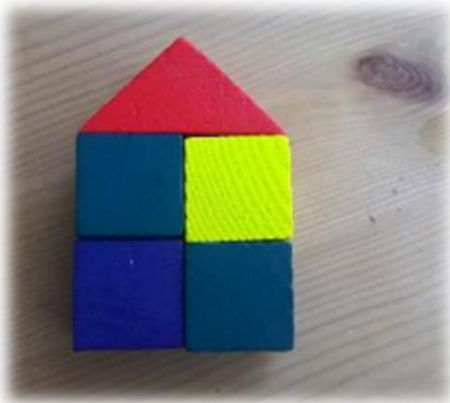
Inset puzzles are easier for your child. You can move onto jigsaws when your child is ready.

- Inset puzzles – hold up two pieces for your child to choose, to encourage interactions
- Jigsaws – choose things that your child likes



Bricks

- Arrange 4-5 blocks for your child and yourself.
- Build on a piece of card or tray,
- Demonstrate simple construction, for example, a house or bridge.
- You may also draw this on a whiteboard or paper



Threading

- Begin with threading onto a stick in playdough, progressing to string with large holes and later smaller holes to thread into.
- Everyday household objects can be used including cardboard tubes, pasta and cheerios etc.



Memory Games

- Use 2 cups to start
- Hide an object your child likes under 1 cup
- Move the cup and see if your child can remember where the object is hiding.
- Then try with more cups.
- Place some objects on a tray.
- Let your child look at them.
- Name the objects.
- Talk about them – colour, size, what they are for
- Take an object away and allow your child to guess which one.



Music, Songs & Rhymes



Music, songs and rhymes can be used

- to build relationships
- to help children relax and become calm
- to help with speech and language development

Simple exercises to music

- Lie your child on back and roll them side to side
- Massage your child to the music
- Sitting opposite and rocking backwards and forwards
- Rocking and swaying together and hold your child at eye level
- Letting your child stand on your feet and move to the music
- Use bits of paper or ribbons as streamers and wave to the music
- Rub talc or cream into your child's feet or hands to the rhythm of the music
- Sing songs or rhymes during the day, for example, when washing hands, brushing teeth, tidying up.

Fun with Music

Instrument ideas:

- Bells
- Tambourine
- Drum
- Rainmaker
- Castanets
- Bazooka
- Keyboard
- Party blowers/whistles



Musical games

- Imitation
- ensure you and your child have an instrument each
- encourage your child to copy what you are doing with your musical instrument

Listening games

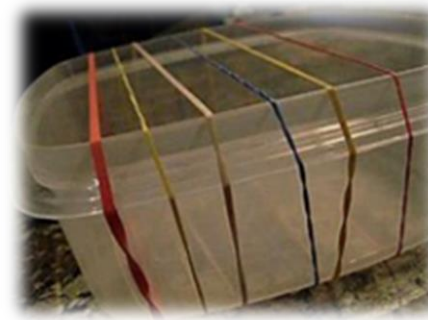
- Sound lotto
- Musical statues
- Musical bumps
- Sound matching game



Making your own music

Use a variety of recycling materials. Remember to seal them properly:

- Milk cartons
- Plastic jars/ containers/ bottles
- Metal tins with plastic lids for example coffee
- Small shoe box
- Elastic bands



Fillings

- Dried peas/lentils/beans
 - Pasta
 - Rice
 - Sand
 - Buttons
- More ideas can be found [here](#)



Physical Games & Activities

Ball Games

Use an inflatable gym ball

- sit/stand your child on the ball,
- hold on to your child securely
- bounce up and down

Lie your child on the ball and rock it



Small ball games

- use a selection of balls with different textures and sizes (a medium sized ball is easier for your child to hold first)
- Sit opposite your child and **roll** the ball to them. (If they are unable to roll back, use another adult or child to show them)
- **Throw** the balls into a box/bucket/basket
- Roll a ball on your child's arms or legs



Ball pool

- Fill a small paddling pool with plastic balls
- You could hide items in the pool, for example favourite toys or wrapped sweets
- Bury your child slowly and gently, by putting balls on top of them



Large hoop

- jumping in the hoop
- take turns to jump in and out of hoop



Jumping

- You could use a small trampoline in house to discourage jumping on furniture.



Large boxes

- Open the top and bottom and create a tunnel for your child to crawl through
- Use the box as other things; for example a boat, house or train.
- Peek a boo games; crouch down in box and jump up, take turns to hide in the box



Skittles

- Use a set of skittles or make your own with plastic bottles
- Use for turn taking or ready steady go games



Cushions

- Play *Ready Steady Go* games - asking your child to get the cushion with the correct picture
- Use as stepping stones
- Have fun play through **gently** throwing cushions at each other, or piling cushions on top of your child



Outside Play

Pavement Chalking

- Draw a circle on the ground with chalk and take turns to jump into it.
- Draw lines; straight, wavy, zig zag etc. Encourage your child to draw over or underneath them.
- Draw different shapes; play 'ready steady go' games, running to each shape.
- You could use sand or water in a squirty bottle or spray bottle



Throwing balls at targets

- Throw balls into different containers. Fill containers with water or sand
- Throw balls into a net or at wind chimes or bells
- Throw balls at tin cans to knock them down
- Play 'ready steady go' games
- In addition to balls use bean bags, rolled up paper or cotton wool balls
- Draw circles & shapes on the ground and throw beanbags



Sand Play

Build sandcastles

Draw in sand

- lines
- shapes
- letters
- numbers

Hide favourite items in sand

Use diggers & vehicles in sand



Balance & Co-ordination Games

Stepping stones

- use bricks
- carpet tiles
- pieces of wood
- chalked circles
- cushions
- Balance beams - doesn't have to be off ground
- string
- ribbon
- fabric
- washing line along the ground



Messy Art

Painting

- stick paper up on shed or wall,
- dip cars into paint and run over paper,
- use roller brushes or sponges
- flick paint from a brush
- Use hands & feet
- Draw shapes, lines, shapes, letters, numbers in shaving foam.
- Spray silly string over different items in the garden. Copy what your child sprays.



Picnics

- Have a pretend picnic using teddies or favourite character toys.
- Introduce a picnic outside with favourite foods, and maybe even try new foods.



Outside Play Equipment

- Swing
- Slide
- Trikes/bikes
- Trampoline
- Tunnels & tents
- Use any play equipment at home you already have available to your child. Play 'ready steady' games, use simple language and communication, mirror play etc.



Supervision
Required

Water Play

Please be aware of the need for adult supervision when your child is playing with, or around water.

Bath Time

Your child can play in the bath without them having to sit in water. Place a large plastic box into bath. This can be put onto a small stool or plastic crate if it is too low for your child.

Ensure that the surrounding area is protected with shower curtain or towels as it will get wet.

- Fill the box with water and try:
 - Changing the temperature of the water, putting in bubbles or food colouring
 - Dropping items into the water (marbles, stones, buttons, shells, coins, cotton reels or any item you can find around the house). Take turns to drop in and provide simple language as you are doing so.
 - Pouring water. Use different items - teapots, cups, beakers, funnels, jugs



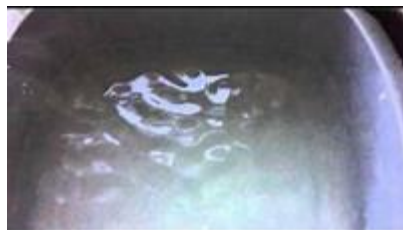
When your child is having a bath:

- Pour water. Pour from different heights
- Wind-up toys
- Washmits shaped liked puppets
- Bath crayons and coloured soap
- Shaving foam



Table Top Water Play

- Put a mirror at the bottom of a bowl, get your child to look at themselves and then create ripples in the water to change their reflection.
- After meal times allow your child to wash up pots/plastic items in a washing up bowl with you supporting, use simple language.
- Drop ice cubes into a transparent bowl. Press them down into the water and watch them come up again.
- Freeze a toy in an ice cube. Put this onto a warm plate and watch it melt. Use appropriate simple language.
- Use a washing up bowl. Add water with cooking oil or oil based paints. Swirl the water to make patterns. You can also try blowing the water with straws. If you use paint you can place paper on the top and lift off.



Outside Water Play

- Use a paddling pool or large container. Put items into the water and give your child a net to fish for the items.
- Create puddles and jump in them.
- Use a hose, water pistol or spray bottle and squirt water at different items.



Home Activities

Laundry Fun

- Sorting - sort clean or dirty items into light & dark, big & little, who they belong to or categories e.g. t-shirts, trousers, socks etc.
- Try on different clothes. Touch and talk about different textures.
- Put adult clothes on to your child and talk about sizes
- Put numerous clothes on, for example, put more than one t-shirt on.
- When washing is done, get your child to help match socks.
- Show or put on different socks. Talk about same and different.
- Put your child in a laundry basket and go for a ride or rock.



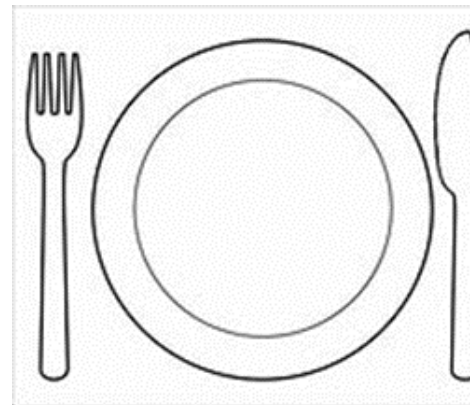
Rubbish Engineer

- Search in each room for the bin.
- Collect each bin and arrange in size order.
- Pour the rubbish from smallest bin into the largest bin until it is full.
- Put the bins back where they belong. You could even put a bin in the wrong location to prompt a correction!
- Use a clean bin as a drum. Use a stick, hanger, shoe or wooden spoon to bang
- Put the bin bags into the outside bin
- Introduce recycling items and sort as appropriate
- Put the rubbish out for collection and watch the rubbish being collected.



Setting the table

- Use large paper. Draw where each item goes. Place plate, fork, knife and spoon on it, the same as you would on the table.
- Do one for each person in the house. You could use different coloured paper or stick a photo of the person on it to show who it belongs to.
- Laminate the drawing if possible. Put it on the table at meal time, and your child can put the items on to it.
- Use simple language to talk about what each meal requires.



Sources of Information:

Playing, Laughing and Learning with Children on the Autism Spectrum, A Practical Resource of play Ideas for Parents and Carers, Second Edition, Julia Moore, 2008 (Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

101 Games and Activities for Children with Autism, Asperger's and Sensory Processing Disorders, Tara Delaney, 2009 (McGraw-Hill)

Images from [freepik.com](https://www.freepik.com) & unsplash.com & Boardmaker

