

What is Play?



Communication
IS EVERYONE'S
BUSINESS

Play is any activity that a child engages with or completed for their own enjoyment (fun).

Play can look like:

- Copying sounds or actions of other people (e.g., copying an adult clapping)
- Playing with “**cause and effect** toys” – where you do something that makes something else happen (e.g., pushing a button to make a toy pop)
- Sorting, categorising, lining up or collecting items – these are all versions of **schema play**
- Pretend play with small world items (e.g., pretend cooking, doctor or teacher games) – this is called **imaginative play**
- Using objects to represent something else (e.g., using a stick as a wand or a sword) – this is called **symbolic play**
- Playing structured games where someone can win or lose – this is called **competitive play**

Play difficulties can look like:

- Not engaging in copying games
- Needing play to be modelled repeatedly (e.g., needing an adult to show them how to use a click-clack-track before playing with it)
- Not being able to engage in pretend / imaginative play
- Not being able to play with toys how you would expect them to (e.g., lining up jigsaw pieces but not putting the puzzle together)
- Playing with a limited range of toys

