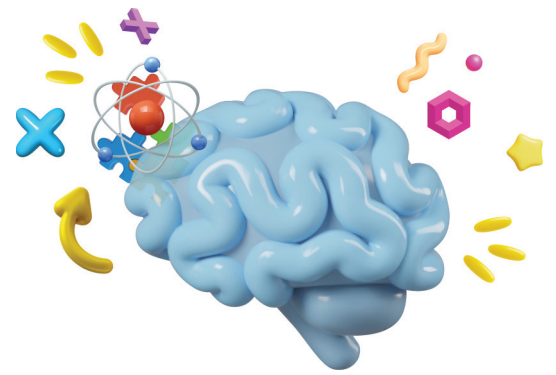


# LET'S PLAY!



## pretend play

Pretend play supports speech development, social and emotional skills, decision-making, planning, and self-regulation. It allows children to explore and learn about common roles, social connections, and objects used every day and in the world around them so they can process and practice what they see happening around them.



Act it out! When you pretend with children you can help extend their play and bring in new ideas. Support pretend play by providing a mix of realistic props and other materials to inspire play.

Pretend play is when kids act things out using their imagination or recreate something in their daily routines and experiences. It can be as simple as feeding a toy bear or as complex as playing made-up stories with friends.

### infants



#### Your role

Engage in “serve and return” or back-and-forth exchanges. Start with talking, silly sounds, or faces; allow a response and follow where the exchange takes you. Talk about what is happening around the baby.

#### When, where, what

Make silly faces, show emotions, and narrate all that is happening around you. You can support the start of pretend play during all daily routines, especially when a child is calm and happy.

### toddlers



#### Your role

Be a play partner! Engage in pretend play with toddlers by acting out familiar routines like feeding a baby, cooking, or driving. Provide realistic props and see what sparks interest. Model using the props. Begin to talk about roles and actions, and build on what the child is acting out.

#### When, where, what

Provide materials that promote pretend play like dolls, stuffed toys, dishes, small tables, and chairs. Begin pretend actions and respond whenever you see a child pretend using objects around them.

### preschoolers



#### Your role

Support children to take on roles, use or make props, and interact with others. Help children choose roles and plan what these roles involve. For example, one child may act as the grocer while another is the customer. Help them decide what each of them needs to play their role.

#### When, where, what

Pretend play can happen anywhere, but dramatic play and block areas are great places to start. Provide materials and ideas for new play themes like doctor's offices, grocery stores, laundromats, etc. Be creative and seek out local resources to use in play!



Visit [ctoec.org/play](https://ctoec.org/play) to see how these ideas connect to the CT ELDS, Sparkler, and other OEC Resources.

