



Playing with your child with autism

Children with Autism can show difficulties in the following:

- Social play with others (perhaps preferring to play alone)
- Repetitive play (liking to play with the same toys in the same ways over and over again)
- Lack of pretend or imaginative play

Professionals involved will be able to provide you with specific advice for developing your child's play skills but here is some general advice which you can put into practice straight away:

- Try to offer opportunities for play with other children, this may be through meeting with family and friends with children of a similar age; and/or your child going to preschool/nursery. This will allow opportunities for turn-taking activities (e.g. taking it in turns to choose a snack or have a go on a game); for observing other children in play; and for sharing, cooperative play and conversation.
- Allow opportunities for free play by having a range of toys available this should include creative play (pens, playdoh or craft items); construction play (e.g. bricks, lego); imaginative play (e.g. teddies/character toys, household items e.g. teaset, toolset, dressing up items); and educational play such as books, puzzles, musical instruments and shape sorters. If there are toys which your child is not used to playing with, you may need to show them what to do by playing with the toys yourself to get their interest.



- During play, sit down with your child so you are at their level (sitting on the floor if they are playing on the floor). Just observe what your child is doing to start with. Then, instead of interrupting what they are doing, use the same toys where possible to copy what your child is doing e.g. if they are building a tower of bricks, you build your own tower of bricks. Use simple language to comment on what is happening e.g. “Ram’s building, mummy’s building”.
- A lot of children with Autism may prefer to play with the same toys in the same ways, this is ok as this is their relaxing time and they are likely to get very upset if you try to prevent them doing it. What you can do to help is model additional ideas to try to extend their play. For example, if your child enjoys putting cars into a long line, you could make car noises, pretend to make the cars crash or park in a car park or pretend to fill the cars with petrol.
- Use specific praise when you notice your child playing well. Rather than saying “good boy”, say “good sharing”, “good taking turns”, “good talking” etc.

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