

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Activity: Narrating children's play

Narrating children's play is an effective way to enhance both the understanding and use of language.

It's an opportunity to move into the children's play space, mindful of not taking control and allowing them to be the leaders of their own play.

Learning aims

- Language development – new vocabulary, expressing thoughts/ideas/emotions, problem solving and question formation etc.
- Creativity and imagination
- Self-directed learning and self-confidence.

Resources

- Loose parts – natural items, small wooden blocks, ribbons, cork etc (be selective, don't put out too much as this can be overwhelming).



Activity outline

1. Arrange the loose parts in an inviting way – you could use baskets or trays to organise them
2. Ensure there is enough space for children to move around and explore, encouraging them to freely choose the items
3. Observe their play - as children play, observe their focus, actions and talk out loud about what you see: it may be as simple as naming the objects the child is playing with or using simple, repetitive phrases with adequate pauses to allow for processing, e.g. "Razaz, I can see that you are placing the pebbles in a line"
4. Adapt your commentary to suit the stage of the child's language development, e.g. if a child is in the early stages of language acquisition and holding a car, point at the object and name it, 'car', adding more detail when appropriate, e.g. "You are holding a big, red car" etc.
5. Comment on children's choices, e.g. "I can see Amir is using the blue fabric to create a roof structure"
6. Connect actions with words, e.g. "Caitlyn you are placing those crinkly leaves very carefully on the table"
7. Enhance social skills, e.g. "You are sharing the feathers with your friend. Joseph looks very happy that you're sharing with him"

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8. Promote words for emotions, e.g. "That is frustrating, but you are staying calm and trying to fix it"
9. Be mindful of the fact that the children are in control, leading their own play. You are there to narrate and respond
10. Allow time for children to respond, listen attentively and respond sensitively
11. Recast or remodel back to the child what they have said in the correct format or by adding more detail such as extra vocabulary, descriptive words, numbers, colours, prepositions etc. For example, Child: "Big stick" Adult, "Yes, the stick is big", "The brown stick is big", "The big brown stick is on the table"
12. Joining in with the activity and narrating your own actions and ideas is a way of demonstrating the authenticity of your interactions and responses.

Extension ideas:

- Narrate other forms of play, e.g. role play, small world play, construction etc.
- Record the children narrating their own play. Listen together and use their responses as a further opportunity to extend their language skills and for you to recast and model well structured, useful, interesting language
- Run a workshop for parents to show them how to narrate their child's play and share the benefits of doing so.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- [Vocabulary and Early Language Skills](#) – online course