

# Ideas for Play



**A resource highlighting games and activities for  
Tutors/Teachers to support the Home or School  
Based Summer Programme**

Developed by NCSE Occupational Therapists & Speech and  
Language Therapists

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# Purpose of this Booklet

This booklet aims to provide play ideas for tutors/teachers supporting students engaged in the Summer Programme. In line with the aims of the **Home Based** and **School Based Summer Programme** the activities in this resource can be used by teachers to support student's physical, social and emotional wellbeing and to support students to re-engage in learning and social activities. This resource supports the key principles of promoting a sense of self-efficacy, connectedness and hope.

It also provides information on how play supports different areas of student's development. The developmental areas focused on are:

- **Motor Skills**
- **Independence Skills**
- **Play and Social Interaction**
- **Language Skills**

## Contents

1. Importance of Play
2. Top Tips for Play
3. Ideas for Pretend Play
4. Ideas for Outdoor/Indoor Play
5. Games for Older Student

# Why is play important?



Play allows student to learn about the world around them. Student need to have a variety of experiences to help them explore their world and practice skills that are important for learning, such as sharing and taking turns.

Research has shown that play stimulates language development and that student often use higher forms of language when playing. All forms of play, either with other student or adults, increases exposure to words or promotes new word learning.

## Top Tips While You Play

- 👍 Set aside time for play every day
- 👍 Play does not have to involve "toys"
- 👍 Follow the student's lead in what and where they want to go
- 👍 Play like a child
- 👍 Try not to take over the play or to 'do it the right way'
- 👍 Try not to ask too many questions
- 👍 Comment on what you or the student is doing
- 👍 Have fun!

## *Ideas to Develop Skills through Pretend Play*



# House



## Motor Skills:

- Encourage large motor movements such as carrying heavy items, pulling and pushing.
- Pick up little items to clean the house or feed and dress a baby doll. This helps to develop fine motor skills.

## Independence:

- Provide opportunity to practice routines such as dressing, meal times etc.
- Consider using a visual schedule to support these routines e.g. picture sequence of how to clean or how to dress baby.

## Play and Social Interaction:

- Encourage turn taking.
- Allow students to try out different roles (e.g. some students can be encouraged to be the teacher/parent in a game and be "in charge").
- Provide opportunity to model relationships and social interactions.

## Language:

- Comment on student's play, e.g. "The baby is sleeping. He's tucked up in bed. Night night".
- Model key words (e.g. furniture and rooms of the house) and concepts (e.g. position words or describing words).
- Remember to model action words (e.g. cook, sweep, clean).
- Model the script, e.g. "I'm the baby and I'm hungry. I want something to eat. Waaaaaa".

# Shop



## Motor Skills:

- Practice different grasps by picking up coins, paper money, different size items.
- Create "aisles" and obstacles for the students to manoeuvre their trolley around and develop motor planning skills.
- Consider having heavy shopping bags for the student to carry, push and pull.

## Independence:

- Provides opportunity to learn about money, recognising coins and basic counting.

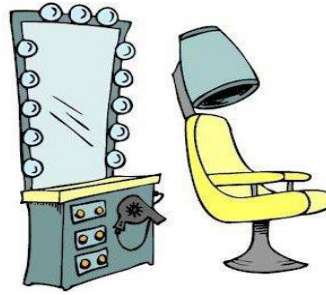
## Play and Social Interaction:

- Encourage students to take turns in different roles (shopkeeper, customer, etc.).
- Provides opportunity to practice waiting, turn taking and using "please" and "thank you".

## Language:

- Comment on student's play, e.g. "Your trolley is getting full. Let's help you push it."
- Model key words to help students develop their vocabulary skills (e.g. shopkeeper, trolley, groceries, toys or clothes, buy/sell, empty/full).
- Model correct grammar, e.g. Student: "I no have no money". Teacher: "You don't have money".
- Model the script, e.g. "Let's go to the toy shop. I wonder what we could buy?"

# Hairdressers



## Motor Skills:

- Provides opportunity to develop different grasps e.g. holding scissors, brush and comb.

## Independence:

- Allows students to role-play or practice having their haircut, washed, brushed or blow-dried. Students who have particular difficulty with these activities may benefit from role-playing with others.

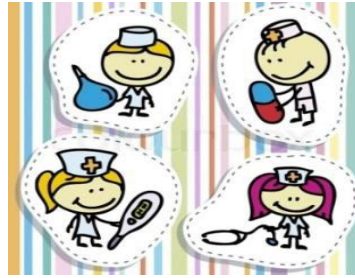
## Play and Social Interaction:

- Practice using money.
- Encourage turn taking.
- Practice waiting and using "please" and "thank you".

## Language:

- Comment on student's play, e.g. "You've got shampoo to wash your hair".
- Model key words and concepts (e.g. scissors, washing, cutting, shampoo, conditioner, curly, straight).
- Model correct grammar, e.g. Student: "I cutted the hair"; Teacher: "You cut her hair".
- Model the script, e.g. "I'm the hairdresser, do you want a haircut?"

# Hospital



- ★ *Students who have experienced ill-health or loss within their family may have traumatic memories and hospital activities could be triggering for them. Always check with caregivers before introducing this theme.*

## Motor Skills:

- Encourage students to "write" notes and prescriptions to practice pre-writing skills. This also provides opportunity for older student to practice writing their name.
- Opening/closing different boxes and containers such as "first aid" box or "medicine" container encourages different types of grasp and works on fine motor strength.

## Independence:

- Role-play may benefit student who are anxious about going to the doctor.
- Provides opportunity to talk about health and well-being.

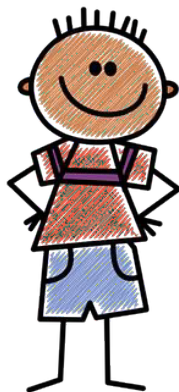
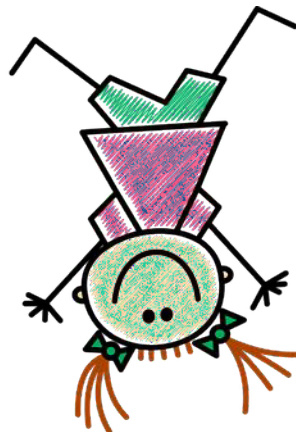
## Play and Social Interaction:

- Encourage students to take turns in different roles (doctor, nurse, patient, etc.).
- Provides opportunity to talk about caring for others and model empathy.

## Language:

- Comment on student's play, e.g. "The boy fell and hurt himself. I think he needs to go to the doctor".
- Model key words (e.g. doctor, nurse, plasters, medicine, injection, hospital, waiting room, temperature).
- Remember to talk about feelings at the doctor's surgery.
- Model the script, e.g. "I'm the doctor. This medicine will make you better".

## *Structured Indoor and Outdoor Activities*



*Ideas based on research on developmental stages of play and the importance of play for learning and development see below for more information:*

- <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/child-health/your-child-learning-through-play/>
- <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/series/the-development-of-play-skills-from-birth-to-3>
- [http://www.ncca.biz/Aistear/pdfs/Guidelines\\_ENG/Play\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ncca.biz/Aistear/pdfs/Guidelines_ENG/Play_ENG.pdf)

# Simon Says



**How to play:** One person is 'Simon' and the others are players. Simon tells the players what to do but they must only follow the commands that begin with the words 'Simon Says'. Students, teachers or puppets could also take turns being 'Simon' and giving the instructions.

**Example commands:**

- Jump up and down
- Stand on one foot
- Run to the slide
- Wave at your friend
- Stamp your feet
- Shake your body
- Hands on your head
- Touch your nose
- Clap your hands
- Touch your toes
- Freeze like a statue
- March on the spot
- Do a twirl

*\*When student can follow instructions with one action, you can then try to add a second action e.g. 'Clap your hands **and then** touch your nose.'*

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# Traffic Light Game



**How to play:** Ask the students to start at one end of the yard/garden/room.

- On the command '**GREEN**' the student run as **fast** as they can around the yard/room.
- On the command '**AMBER**' the student **slow** down to a trot/jog.
- On the command '**RED**' the student **stop**.

*Give commands randomly to keep students paying attention!*

**How to change the game:**

- ✓ Use visual colour cards instead of verbal commands
- ✓ Use other word/pictures to represent speed of movement e.g. 'snail', 'hare'
- ✓ DVD Player Game: Students find a space and change their movements according to instructions relating to the functions of a DVD player. For example:
  - ✓ Fast forward = run forward
  - ✓ Rewind = walk backwards
  - ✓ Play = walk forwards
  - ✓ Eject = jump up
  - ✓ Pause = stop

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# What Time is It Mr. Wolf?



**How to play:** One student is the 'wolf' and the rest are the 'sheep'. The wolf stands at one end of the yard/garden/room with his/her back to the sheep.

- The sheep call out 'What time is it Mr. Wolf?'
- Mr. Wolf turns to face them and shouts a time (e.g. 2 o'clock).
- The sheep then take the same number of steps as the time (e.g. 2 steps).
- Mr. Wolf turns his back again for the sheep to call out 'What time is it Mr. Wolf?'
- When the sheep get close to the wolf he shouts out 'dinner time' and chases them back to the start line (their den!).
- If a sheep gets caught, they become Mr. Wolf

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# Animal Walks



**How to play:** Have students discuss how different animals move:

- Bunny hops - crouch down and spring up
- Kangaroo - jump two feet together
- Snake - on tummy and commando crawl
- Bear - crawl on all-fours
- Be different types of dinosaurs
- Adopt positions/movements on the leader's command

## Tips:

- ✓ Increase the distance over which the student has to move
- ✓ Increase the length of time students have to maintain each position
- ✓ Link different types of animal walks
- ✓ Have animal Olympics or an animal parade

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# Obstacle Course

**How to play:** Make an obstacle course using outdoor/indoor play equipment.

Use movements such as walking, jumping, climbing, crawling, throwing and balancing.



## Examples:

- Climb up the slide
- Walk down the stairs
- Tip toe along a line
- Jump over a mat
- Throw beanbag into a bucket
- Scooter under the climbing frame

## Additional Ideas:

- ✓ Adapt for indoors using tent, tunnel, chairs and tables to crawl under.
- ✓ Carry an item throughout the obstacle course.
- ✓ Collect 'treasure' like beanbags throughout the obstacle course
- ✓ Try circuits by having an area to do a specific movement until changeover time e.g. jump on the spot, stand on one leg.
- ✓ Use a theme like being a spy, ninja, in the forest, under the sea.
- ✓ Use a backwards countdown to signal the start of each turn 5,4,3,2,1.
- ✓ Encourage students to talk about what he/she did to develop their sentences using past tense verbs. Taking photos of the student completing the obstacle course could support this.

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# Fruit Salad Game



**How to play:** Students sit in a circle and are given a picture of a 'fruit'. The leader calls out a fruit and these two students have to swap places e.g. If the leader says 'bananas', the two students with the bananas switch seats.

If you say **"Fruit Salad"** everyone has to swap.

**To make this activity harder if needed:**

- ✓ Increase the number of the 'fruits' called e.g.
  - Say 2 different fruits and those students have to swap places (e.g. "bananas and oranges").
  - Say 3 different fruits and those students have to swap places (e.g. "bananas, oranges apples"), etc.
  - You can make this game harder by taking away the pictures and seeing if the students can remember their fruit. Alternatively, swap the pictures around after a few turns so that they now have to listen for a different item.

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