

Playing Make Believe: 24-36 Months

Playing make believe will help your child:

- Practice using her imagination
- Imitate different roles & routines
- Start to learn the difference between what's real and what's not

Ideas to try with your child:

- Offer items (props) around the house for make believe such as stuffed animals, dolls, play food, plastic dishes, and pots & pans. Small towels can become a doll blanket, and a box can be a doll bed.
- Make a dress up box. Add both clothes for males and females: hats, purses, scarves, oversized skirts and shorts with elastic waistbands, aprons, or vests.
- Let your child give you a role to play with her: "You're the baby and I'm the mommy." Follow her lead as you play together.

If your child is struggling:

- Suggest ideas for make believe for your child first: "Let's pretend we are firefighters and put out the fire," "Let's go to the pet store and buy a puppy."
- Use books, puppets, and stories to encourage ideas for make believe, like the Three Little Pigs, Goldilocks and the 3 Bears. You can also come up with scenarios like "Going on a picnic."

Going further:

- Talk about what's real and what's not real: real animals and stuffed animals, real food and pretend food.
- Work on make believe projects together: create your own props, brainstorm roles to play like community members, and imitate daily chores (washing & ironing clothes, fixing dinner).
- During play time ask questions like, "Let's pretend we are on a picnic; what would we bring?"

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children's best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children ages 16-36 months** that parents can help improve at home.



Adapted from *WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, 2012*: "Play make-believe with props such as dolls or stuffed animals" *Learning About My World*, Ages-16-36 months, pg. 50