

Learning Through Pretend Play: Ages 4-5

Pretend play gives your child the opportunity to:

- Play cooperatively with others as they create a story or scene
- Build vocabulary as new words or concepts are introduced
- Act out events that are important to him, especially those tied to strong emotions



Ideas to try with your child:

- Offer items around the house to spark play ideas: gloves can make your child a doctor, a scarf can become a boa for an actress, a nightgown can be a princess dress, or a hat can be a football helmet.
- Participate with your child as she “sets the scene” and assigns roles to the other “players.” Use stuffed animals if you need extra characters.
- Add an element of pretend play to everyday tasks. “Let’s pretend we’re super heroes and have to get the room picked up as fast as a speeding bullet!”

If your child is struggling:

- Sometimes knowing what to pretend is difficult. Act out something the family did recently with dolls or stuffed animals.
- Use children’s picture books as stories that can be acted out. Try “Where the Wild Things Are” by Mercer Mayer or “Five Little Monkeys” by Eileen Christelow. Repetitive stories are the most fun!

Going further:

- Go to the library and check out non-fiction books to find out the names of real objects in the role play; an anti-gravity suit for the space crew, or a “backhoe” for the construction site.
- Invite your child to make a list of materials he will need for his elaborate pretend play. Allow the “spaceship” or the “firehouse” to stand for a few hours as he adds signs and creates costumes.

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 4-5** that parents can help improve at home.



Adapted from *WA State Early Learning and Development Guidelines, 2012*: “Enjoy pretend play (such as using dolls or stuffed animals, or playing “house” or “explorers”).” About Me and My Family and Culture, Ages 4-5, pg. 72