

Book III: Parent Handbook



Advancing Social-Communication and Play

An Intervention Program for Preschoolers with Autism

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Advancing Social-Communication & Play: An Intervention Program for Preschoolers with Autism



.....
Parent Guide
.....

Hello Parent,

Welcome to the ASAP intervention program. The ASAP program targets two important skills for children with autism: social-communication and play.

During the intervention, you will be provided with parent guide sheets to help you work on the key skills with your child at home. The parent guide sheets will help you know more about social-communication, play, and social interaction and why they are important for your child's development. The guide sheets will also give you a better understanding of the goals we are working on with your child at school.

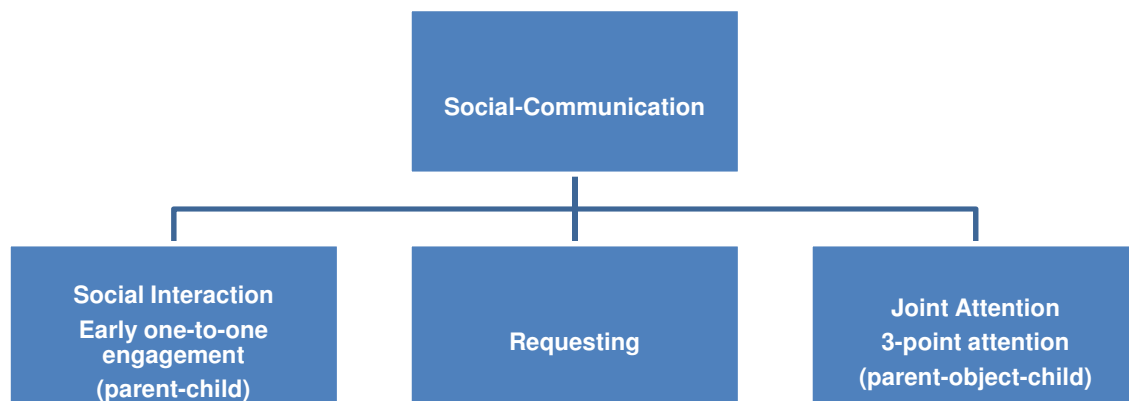
We realize that as a parent, your time is limited and your schedule is likely very busy. We want to emphasize that doing these activities at home can and should be fun for you and your child. It is a good idea to work with your child for short periods of time at first and we hope you will look for ways to use these teaching ideas in your daily routines. The most important point is that both you and your child have fun doing the activities. The activities described here are intended as a guide to help you get started. Please feel free to adapt them to fit your child and your schedule.

SOCIAL-COMMUNICATION



What is social-communication?

Social-communication refers to the way we use eye contact, gestures and language to “tune in” to each other. These behaviors include *Social Interaction*, or one-on-one (parent-child) engagement, *Requesting*, and *Joint Attention*, or the 3-point coordination of attention between child, parent, and some other object or event in the immediate environment. Each of these aspects of joint attention will be explained in the following sections.



What does social-communication look like?

A child may indicate s/he wants snack by reaching for a box of crackers on the kitchen counter and then looking between you and the box of crackers. Children use eye gaze and gestures to establish social-communication by doing the following:

Giving

Reaching

Attending

Showing

Pointing

OR

G-R-A-S-P



Why is social-communication important?

Social-communication is a foundational skill for communicative development. Through social-communication, children learn what their parents are paying attention to and talking about. Social-communication is also the way children learn how to act on the world by drawing attention to their needs and requests, even before the onset of language. Early social-communication ability is related to later language development. Research has shown that for children with autism, social-communication ability may be delayed in its development.

How do I help my child develop social-communication?

In the following sections, we will talk about each of the components of social-communication, what they look like, why they are important and how to work on them with your child. The social-communication components we discuss are:

Social Interaction

Requesting

Joint Attention



SOCIAL INTERACTION



What is Social Interaction?

Social interaction describes the verbal and nonverbal *face-to-face exchanges between your child and you*. Making sounds back-and-forth, singing, tickle games, dancing games, and lifting up and down routines are examples of social interaction.

Why is social interaction important?

Social interaction is an important building block for social-communication and other communication skills. As your child learns to exchange vocalizations, looking, and movements with you, s/he is learning the back-and-forth social skills that form the basis of language development.

How can you work on social interaction?

All types of back-and-forth games provide opportunities for you to work on social interaction with your child. For example, you can imitate the sounds your child makes and see if s/he will repeat what has been said again and thus take another turn. Tickle games are also a fun way to work on social interaction. After your child learns the routine of a tickle game and starts to anticipate that you will tickle, try pausing and waiting to see if your child looks at you or touches your hand to get you to start tickling again. You can use similar pauses when singing familiar songs, counting or saying the alphabet.

REQUESTING



What is Requesting?

Requesting refers to the way your child asks you to give him/her something (e.g., juice) or to do some action (e.g., fix a toy car).

Why is requesting important?

Requesting also is a building block to developing social-communication. As your child learns to request, s/he becomes more successful in getting his/her needs met and realizing s/he has to interact with others to get those needs met. Also, in making requests, your child learns to direct your attention to the objects that s/he wants or to the things that s/he wants you to do for him/her.

How can you work on your child's requesting?

Visual strategies are often helpful in teaching your child to request. Start with items (e.g., crackers, a toy) you know your child really likes. Have your child exchange a photo of crackers to get a cracker. Also, offering a child a choice of two items provides a natural opportunity for your child to make a request. For example, you can hold crackers in one hand and cookies in another and have your child indicate which one s/he wants by looking at or reaching for the item. When s/he shows you what s/he wants, use that as an opportunity to pair the request with a verbal model

(e.g., “Oh, you want crackers!”). Placing a favorite toy or snack your child enjoys into a clear plastic jar or container with a closed lid is another way to elicit a request from your child. Hand the container to your child and see if your child will use a vocalization, word or gesture (e.g., hand the container back to you) to request help to get the snack or toy. Another idea is to use toys with a “stop” button or off-switch to help your child learn to request. Turn the toy on, let your child engage with it and then turn it off and wait for your child to signal that s/he wants the toy back on.

Please keep in mind that it is important that these requesting opportunities be **natural and enjoyable for both you and your child**. If your child shows you what s/he wants by looking, reaching, or pointing, you can model the request for him/her (e.g., “Oh, you want more Cheerios”) and give him/her the item. In this way, you are teaching your child to make requests, without making this a stressful situation.

JOINT ATTENTION



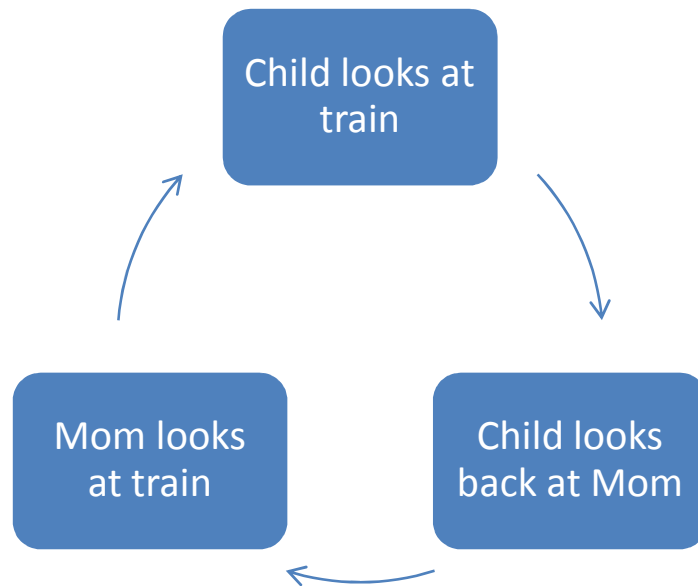
What is Joint Attention?

Joint attention refers to the way we use eye contact, gestures and language to “tune in” to each other. *Joint attention refers to the specific ability of a child to (1) attend to an object or event, (2) “check in with you,” and (3) attend back-and-forth between you and the object or event.* In joint attention episodes, your child is not checking in to make a request or to get something s/he wants but is looking between you and an object or event, just to share in the moment or activity.

Is joint attention the same as paying attention?

Not exactly. When we say a child is “paying attention” that can have a variety of meanings. It may mean s/he is listening to us and our words. However, it can also mean s/he is looking at a particular toy or T.V. show. Some children can be very attentive to preferred topics or particular toys, T.V. shows or computer games and yet have very poor joint attention.

When we say a child is showing **joint attention**, we mean that s/he is engaging in the very important social skill of “tuning in” to another person to share experiences or to make requests. Joint attention requires a back-and-forth interaction (verbal and/or nonverbal) and shared attention between child, parent and some other object or event in the immediate environment.



Why is joint attention important?

Joint attention is a foundational skill for the development of language and social-communication. Through giving, reaching, attending, showing and pointing (G-R-A-S-P), your child is learning to draw your attention to something s/he is enjoying or to follow your gestures or vocalizations to find out what you are showing him/her.

How can you work on your child's joint attention?

When your child reaches toward, points at, shows you, or gives you an object, look at the object and at your child, then comment about that object or name it. For example, if your child points to a dog, look back-and-forth between your child and the dog and comment about the dog (e.g., “Look, big dog!”). You can also work on joint attention by pointing, showing, or giving an object of interest to your child while looking at and talking to your child. Book sharing is another way to take turns pointing out interesting pictures and story events with your child. Finally, you can create fun opportunities for your child to share with you by hiding motivating toys under boxes or other coverings and letting your child find it and show it to you.

PLAY



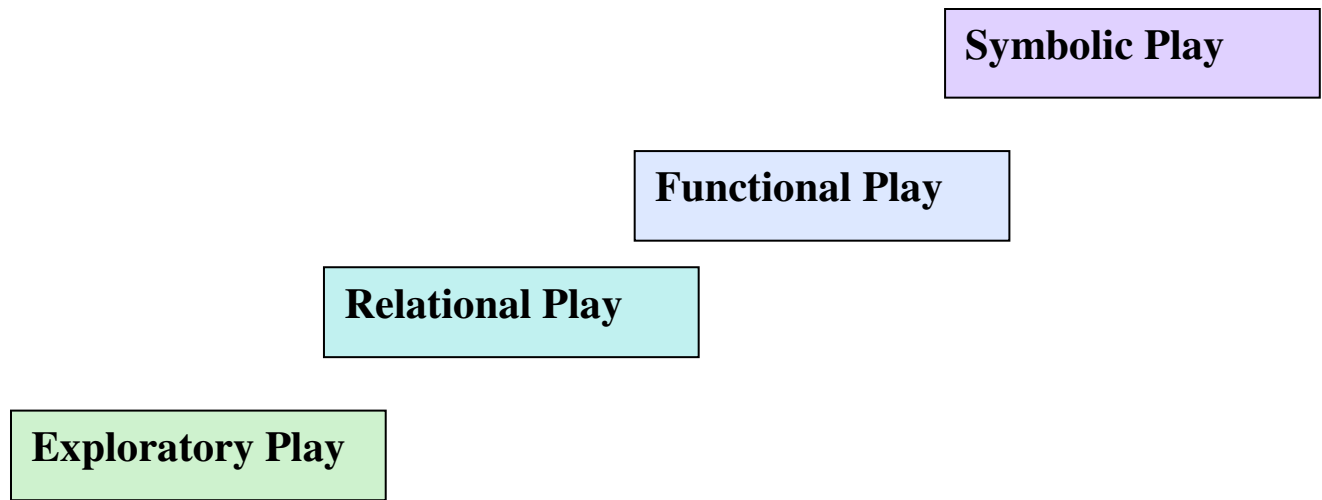
Why is play important?

Play refers to how children explore toys, put toys together, and begin to use imagination to act out roles and pretend. Play is a foundational skill for social and language development. Children learn through play. Play skills provide children with common interests they can talk about with an adult or peer. Research has shown that children who engage in pretend play will have more opportunities to successfully interact with peers and thus increase their own social skills.

For children with autism, intervention that improves play skills has also been shown to improve language skills. Thus, targeting play skills is particularly important for our children with autism who have difficulty learning how to play. Children with autism often learn some aspects of play (e.g., lining up cars; enacting parts of favorite T.V. shows). However, they may need support to attain a full-range of play skills and to be able to use those skills in a variety of situations.

How do play skills develop?

Children's play develops over 4 increasingly complex stages. Generally, these four different types of play are categorized in the following areas:



In the following sections, we will discuss each of these 4 levels of play, explaining each level and providing ideas for targeting these play skills with your child.

EXPLORATORY PLAY



What is Exploratory Play?

In exploratory play, children are examining and learning about the properties of toys through mouthing, banging, spinning, dropping, pushing, etc.

How can you work on your child's exploratory play?

Join in your child's exploratory play by rolling balls or modeling how to turn pages in a book or blow bubbles. Your child may need modeling and support to investigate new textures or toys. Provide a variety of different types of toys that make different sounds and have different textures and edges. Shiny toys can be very enticing, as can toys that have movement and noise. Provide opportunities for humor and surprise with the toys.

Once your child has shown some interest in exploring toys, you can begin teaching him/her how to start using 2 or more toys together in meaningful ways.

Recommended toys:

Balls, slinky, play-dough, bubbles, mechanical toys

RELATIONAL PLAY



What is Relational Play?

At this stage, your child starts to put objects together in his/her play. Examples of this kind of play are putting together puzzles, stacking blocks, removing and replacing lids on pots, lining up toys, or sorting (e.g., shapes, colors, or animals by category).

How can you work on relational play with your child?

You can model relational play for your child by constructing a block tower and knocking it down, putting objects together (e.g., stringing beads), and sorting shapes in a shape sorter.

Recommended toys:

Blocks, shape sorters, puzzles, toy pots and pans with lids

FUNCTIONAL PLAY



What is Functional Play?

Functional play is how children first learn to pretend. In this stage of play, children start to move beyond understanding how to use 2 toys together (e.g., stacking toys, putting toys in and out, placing a spoon in a toy cup) to some beginning pretend play with the toys (e.g., stirring the spoon in the cup, pretending to drink from a toy cup). Functional play involves using toys in the way they are meant to be used. Using toy phones to call someone and cooking with miniature pots and pans are examples of functional play.

How can you work on functional play with your child?

You can have fun modeling these early pretend skills for your child. For example, pretend to drink from a cup. Exaggerate sipping sounds and say “ahh” when you are finished sipping. When your child is able to imitate your pretend models, you can begin to add in more elements to the play over time. For example, you can pretend to eat with a spoon. You can also let your child feed you from a spoon or model for your child feeding a doll or toy animal.

Recommended Toys:

Dolls (including “action figures”), stuffed toys, toy plates, cups, spoons for pretend eating, housekeeping sets

SYMBOLIC PLAY



What is Symbolic Play?

Symbolic play refers to a high level of pretending that includes substituting one object for another (e.g., pretending a block is a car), pretending something has a property it does not have (e.g., pretending toy French fries are hot), or referring to something as if it were present (e.g., pretending there is tea in a toy teapot). Finally, role play, when a child pretends to be a teacher or firefighter, is another form of symbolic play.

How can you work on symbolic play with your child?

Pretend cooking activities are a great way to pretend with your child that a food is too hot or too cold or for substituting one object for another (e.g., a block for milk). You can substitute one object for another by such activities as pretending two chairs positioned side by side are the front seats of a car or the seats of an airplane, or that a large box is a house, a fort, or a cave. Role-playing games are another way to target symbolic play skills. For example, you can have your child act out a role from a favorite game or video. When your child is able to take one role, you can then increase the complexity by trading roles with your child (e.g., have your child play the 'bad' monster instead of the 'good' monster). Role play is also a good opportunity to model problem-solving skills.

For example, you and your child can talk about how to make a ‘mean’ alligator into a ‘nice’ one (i.e., what could the alligator do to change?).

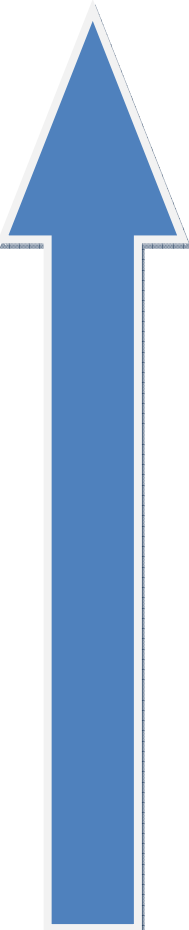
Don't be afraid to have fun and be silly with your child during symbolic play. For example, changing your voice when you read or putting on a hat or funny nose can help a young child learn and practice humor.

Recommended Toys:

Toy plates, cups, spoons, dolls, dress up clothes, materials for forts, a playhouse, tool chest, books

Prompting Your Child's Success

Prompts are a way of providing support to your child's learning and are a useful tool in teaching a new skill. When your child is learning a new skill, s/he may require help in the beginning, but as s/he begins to show progress, you will want to provide less help so that s/he can eventually use the skill independently. Below is a chart showing the prompt levels from the "Least Directive" up through the "Most Directive." Be sure to give your child time to respond by waiting before moving on to the next prompt.

	Type of Prompt	Description	Example
 <p>Most Directive</p>	Physical Assistance (Partial or Full)	Guide your child's arm or use "hand-over-hand."	When teaching your child to roll play-dough, guide their hand to the play-dough by their elbow OR take your child's hand into your hand and guide him/her to roll the play-dough if they need additional support.
	Modeling (Partial or Full)	Model the targeted skill for your child partially or fully, showing them exactly what you want them to do.	When teaching your child to throw a ball through a hoop, you can hold the ball up as if you are about to throw it into the hoop and WAIT to see if s/he will throw his/her ball towards the hoop OR you can throw your ball into the hoop and give a ball to him/her to see if s/he will imitate you.
	Spoken Instructions	Tell your child (in simple language) exactly what you want them to do.	When teaching your child to pretend to wash a stuffed dog, say, "Give the dog a bath."
	Spoken Hints	Give your child a hint about what you want the child to do.	If you want your child to pretend to give you a drink from a toy cup the child is playing with, say, "I'm thirsty!"
	Gesture	Use a point or other gesture to prompt the expected response.	Point or reach towards a toy that you want your child to give you or point towards the road map that you want him/her to his/her toy car on.
	Positional	Position the correct response in a particular location, so that the child is more likely choose it.	When teaching the child to put toys together, place the next size nesting cup or puzzle piece closest to the child.
	Environmental Visual/Pictorial	Set up the space to encourage your child to work on a specific skill or use a picture(s) or other two dimensional representation (words, symbols, etc.) that illustrates the skill.	Remove extra toys and leave only the items you want your child to use accessible to them OR have a picture sequence, such as a picture of the toy bus, a picture of the toy people, and a picture of the toy people in the bus.
Least Directive			



Here is an example of how you would run through the prompt levels when teaching a new skill, beginning with the least directive prompt (e.g., environmental or positional) and working up to the most directive prompt (physical assistance).

If you are trying to teach your child to feed a baby doll or stuffed animal, you might:

- 1) If you are seated at the table, have only the doll/animal, spoon, and bowl available at the table. This would be an example of an **environmental** prompt. Or you could show your child a picture or picture sequence of someone feeding a doll. This would be a **pictorial** prompt.
- 2) If your child does not respond, you may want to place the spoon near his/her hand. This would be an example of a **positional** prompt.
- 3) If the positional prompt is unsuccessful, you can use a **gesture** such as handing the spoon to him/her or pointing to the spoon.
- 4) Next you can offer a **spoken hint** such as, “The baby is hungry”
- 5) You can then offer direct **spoken instructions** by telling him/her, “Feed the baby”
- 6) Your next step would be to feed the doll yourself to **model** what you want him/her to do and watch to see if s/he will imitate.
- 7) If lower level prompts have not been successful, you can move to **physical assistance** by placing the spoon in your child’s hand and pushing his/her elbow to move his/her arm towards the doll (**partial physical assist**) OR place your hand over his/her hand that is holding the spoon and guide it to the dolls mouth (**full physical assist**).

Be sure to keep the activity fun for your child! As you are feeding the doll, make sounds and say something like, “Yum, yum! The baby likes the food. She was so hungry.”

Being silly and making sounds can help to keep your child engaged and will encourage him/her to imitate what you are doing. Also, remember to give your child enough time between prompts. Wait and watch to see what s/he can do!

**Goal and Activity Sharing Forms to Build
Collaboration Between
Parents and School Staff**

Goal and Activity Sharing Form

from School Staff to Parents

Date: _____

Dear _____,

This week, we are working on the following social-communication and play goals with _____.

Social-Communication Goal: _____

Here are some activities we are trying with your child in the classroom to target this goal:

Here are some suggestions for you to try in targeting this goal at home:

Play Goal: _____

Here are some activities we are trying with your child in the classroom to target this goal:

Here are some suggestions for you to target this goal at home:

Goal and Activity Sharing Form

from Parents to School Staff

Date: _____

Dear _____,

This week, we are working on the following social-communication and play goals at home with _____.

Social-Communication Goal: _____

Here are some activities we have found to be effective in targeting this goal at home:

Here are some things we are struggling with or would like more information on:

Play Goal: _____

Here are some activities we have found to be effective in targeting this goal at home:

Here are some things we are struggling with or would like more information on:

Social Interaction Goals

Social interaction describes the back-and-forth exchanges between you and your child. When you engage in these face-to-face games, your child is learning to communicate.

Social Interaction Goal 1. During face-to-face games, physical activities, or routines, your child watches you closely

The purpose of this goal is to help your child interact with you more often and more consistently. It will also teach your child that when s/he looks at you and shows interest in a fun game or routine, you will continue to play the game or routine with him/her. Play any of the games listed below with your child (or similar games that you and your child enjoy). In the middle of the game, pause to see if your child will look at you. If your child doesn't look, wait a few seconds before doing the action again. The idea is to get your child to show you s/he wants to keep going by looking at you. Even if your child doesn't look, keep doing the action and waiting in between actions to try to get him/her to look. Continue to play the game as long as your child is interested. If your child does not seem interested in a certain game or does not like it, try another game.

Suggested activities:

- Peek-a-boo
- Tickling
- Pushing child on a swing
- Itsy Bitsy Spider
- Ring-around-the-Rosie
- Lifting child over your head

Notes/Suggestions:

Social Interaction Goals

Social interaction describes the back-and-forth exchanges between you and your child. When you engage in these face-to-face games, your child is learning to communicate.

Social Interaction Goal 2. During face-to-face games, physical activities, or routines, after a brief pause your child shows wanting the game to continue

The purpose of this goal is to help your child learn to look at you and say a sound or word(s), or make a gesture to let you know that s/he would like you to keep a fun game or routine going. For example, after bouncing your child on your lap and stopping, s/he bounces to show you to do it again. Or after you take a turn in peek-a-boo, your child pushes the blanket toward you (or pulls on your arm) to do it again.

Suggested activities:

- Use activities similar to those used in Social Interaction 1 (e.g., peek-a-boo, tickling, pushing child on a swing, Itsy Bitsy Spider, Ring-around-the-Rosie, lifting child over your head), but pause in the middle of the activity before continuing to encourage your child to look at you, vocalize, use a word, or gesture.
- Play Ring-around-the-Rosie two times. Once you know that your child is having fun and engaged in the game, start the song and movement a third time, but stop in the middle of the song and pause for several seconds. As soon as your child looks at you, speaks, or gestures, finish the song and movement. If your child does not look at you, speak, or gesture, provide a prompt such as, “Hey!” (to get your child to look at you) or “Do you want to play more?” or placing your hands in a position to play the game and wait to see if your child will touch or move your hands.

Notes/Suggestions:

Social Interaction Goals

Social interaction describes the back-and-forth exchanges between you and your child. When you engage in these face-to-face games, your child is learning to communicate.

Social Interaction Goal 3. Your child plays back-and-forth games with objects or actions

This goal will help your child engage with you through sharing objects and copying actions. You can use just about any activity or toy that your child likes to try to encourage back-and-forth exchanges of objects and imitation. The main idea is to get your child to take turns with you playing with objects or in imitation.

Suggested activities:

- During bath time, push a boat over to your child then encourage your child to push the boat back to you. Make fun motor noises and make waves for the boat. You can also use other bath toys like animals or bath crayons to take turns and encourage your child to imitate your actions.
- Take turns making faces in a mirror that is large enough for both of your faces. Stick out your tongue and wait to see if your child will also stick out his/her tongue. Put your thumb on your nose and wiggle your fingers. Wait to see if your child imitates you. Put your thumbs in your ears and wiggle your fingers. Wait to see if your child repeats after you. Suck in your cheeks and make fish lips, and see if your child will do the same thing. Any kinds of actions, sounds, or gestures will do.
- Toss a ball or bean bag to your child from 1-2 feet away. Encourage your child to throw the ball or bean bag back to you. Continue to toss the ball or bean bag back-and-forth for several minutes. Sometimes having another child or person join the game may help your child see how to do it.

Notes/Suggestions:

Social Interaction Goals

Social interaction describes the back-and-forth exchanges between you and your child. When you engage in these face-to-face games, your child is learning to communicate.

Social Interaction Goal 4. Your child initiates familiar games or routines

The purpose of this goal is to encourage your child to show you that s/he wants you to play a familiar game with him/her. You can play games like those used in Social Interaction 1, such as tickle and peek-a-boo. For example, first play peek-a-boo using a blanket to cover your head and your child's head. After several turns covering your head and covering your child's head, put the blanket next to you on the floor or sofa and start a tickle game. After a few moments of playing the tickle game, stop tickling your child and pause to see if s/he will pick up the blanket to initiate the peek-a-boo game. Sometimes having another child or person pick up the blanket and start the game with you may help your child see how to do it.

Suggested activities:

- Peek-a-boo and tickling game
- Swinging and Ring-around-the-Rosie
- Playing with cars and building with blocks

Notes/Suggestions:

Social Interaction Goals

Social interaction describes the back-and-forth exchanges between you and your child. When you engage in these face-to-face games, your child is learning to communicate.

Social Interaction Goal 5. Your child expands games or routines

The activities for this goal will help your child interact socially in more varied ways, that means your child will learn to play a variety of games and activities with several different people (e.g., you, your spouse, siblings, grandparents). For example, it is important that your child is able to play social games with you and also with other family members and peers. To target this goal, you will need to enlist the help of others in your family including your partner, other children, and grandparents. Your child should also be able to take part in games in different ways—for example, be able to start a game as well as to join in a game that you start, or be able to chase you as well as to run when you chase him/her.

Suggested activities:

- Ring-around-the-Rosie: Begin a game of Ring-around-the-Rosie then have another person join in the song and dance. Or, if you are the one who usually starts the song and dance, wait for your child to start the song and dance.
- Encourage your child to push you (or another child/person) on a swing.
- Chase game: First chase and catch your child. Then change the game and run away from your child, looking back and encouraging your child to chase and catch you. Make it easy for your child to succeed (for example, by not running too far before you let your child catch up to you), and make the game fun either way (for example, give your child a hug or a swing or a tickle when one person catches the other one).

Notes/Suggestions:

Social Interaction Goals

Social interaction describes the back-and-forth exchanges between you and your child. When you engage in these face-to-face games, your child is learning to communicate.

Social Interaction Goal 6. Your child combines gesture and/or vocalization/verbalization with looking at person to show wanting game to continue

The purpose of this goal is to encourage your child to ask for games and activities by using higher level ways of communicating. This includes encouraging your child to look at you while also using gestures such as pointing, using sounds, using word approximations (such as “ba” for “ball”), or using two words instead of just one like “more swing.” Even if your child is able to use words effectively to show interest in a game (e.g., “more tickle”), it is important to encourage your child to also look at you when communicating. Helping your child to use eye contact and gestures will make your child’s communication clearer and improve understanding for both you and your child.

Suggested activities:

- Ring-around-the-Rosie: Begin a game of ring-around-the-rosie then stop. Wait for your child to start the song and dance and encourage your child to use a higher level way of asking to restart the game. For example, coach your child to look at you and say “play” or “start again.”
- While pushing your child on a swing, grab the swing and hold it to stop the swing. Wait for several seconds to see if your child will look at you and use a higher level of asking (saying something to ask to keep swinging, or gesture to swing). Once your child has let you know that s/he would like to continue to swing, let go of the swing and continue pushing. Stop the swing 3-4 times to continue to encourage your child to let you know s/he wants to keep swinging through looking at you in addition to saying something and/or gesturing to you.
- Chase game: When it is your turn to chase and catch your child, pause for several seconds and encourage your child to ask to restart the game through the use of eye contact and gestures, words, or sounds.

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 1. Your child reaches for an out of reach object to show wanting the object

These activities will help your child learn to reach toward objects to let you know that s/he wants the object. You can do this by holding up two objects, one in your left hand and one in your right hand, and asking your child, “Which do you want?” Make sure that you hold the objects far enough away from your child that s/he cannot simply grab the object from your hand. If your child does not reach for the object, playfully say “show me which one?” and wiggle the items in your hand. You can also move the items within reach to see if that will encourage your child to move his/her hand toward one of the objects. If your child indicates what s/he wants by just naming the object but does not reach toward it, pretend that you still are not sure what s/he wants, and say, “Show me which one.” Be sure not to let your child get too frustrated and if the child doesn’t do what you ask after some playful encouraging, move on and try again later. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect.

Suggested activities:

- **Meal Time:** Hold up two similar food choices and ask your child which s/he would like. For example, two different boxes of cereal or two types of juice. Even if your child is a picky eater, you can still work on requesting using food. As long as your child likes one of the two foods, it does not matter that your child will not choose the other food.
- **Shopping:** When making a purchase for your child at a store, hold up two items and ask your child to select one. For example, if you are buying a toy car, hold up a red car in your right hand and a green car in your left hand. If you are purchasing a snack, hold up goldfish in one hand and graham crackers in the other hand.
- **Play Time or Bath Time:** During play or bath time, hold up two toys and ask your child which s/he would like to play with.

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 2. Your child pulls a person's hand toward objects to show request for help

These activities will help your child learn to pull your hand to an object to let you know that s/he needs help with the object. This can be done by giving your child an object that s/he can't use without your help. For example, give your child a favorite toy that s/he cannot operate without assistance, such as a bubble gun. Your child will not be able to use this fun toy until s/he gets your attention and requests help to operate the bubble gun. You can also give your child a snack that is in a difficult to open container, such as zip-lock bag, and then make your hand accessible as your child realizes s/he needs help. Be sure not to let your child get too frustrated and if the child doesn't do what you ask after some playful encouraging, move on and try again later. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (putting your hand on the object to operate or open it).

Suggested activities:

- Meal Time: Give your child food in containers that s/he can't open. For example, give your child a juice box without a straw or crackers in a container with a screw-on top.
- Brushing Teeth: If your child has difficulty opening containers with twist tops, give him/her the toothpaste tube with the lid on so that s/he has to ask for help.
- Bubbles: Use a bubble gun that your child can't operate without assistance and then hand it to him/her to take a turn.

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 3. Your child gives objects to show request for help

These activities will help your child learn to hand objects to you to let you know that s/he needs help with the object. This can be done by giving your child an object that s/he can't use without your help. For example, give your child fruit in an unopened can for snack or a meal. Your child will not be able to eat the fruit until s/he gets your attention and requests help to open the can. If your child asks for help only by using words, encourage him/her to also hold the can of fruit toward you, so that the gestures match what your child is saying with his/her words. Be sure not to let your child get too frustrated and if the child doesn't do what you ask after some playful encouraging, move on and try again later. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (handing you the object they want help opening).

Suggested activities:

- Meal Time: Give your child food in containers that s/he can't open. For example, give your child grapes in a container that has a screw-on top or give an unopened juice box with a straw in its plastic sleeve.
- Bubbles: If your child has difficulty opening containers with twist tops, give him/her the bubble wand and a container of bubble 'juice' with a tightly fitting lid.
- Art: Give your child a piece of paper and a container of markers with difficult lids.

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 4a. Your child looks at nearby objects when another person points to the objects as a request

This activity will help your child share attention with you to an object that you want, and to respond to your requests. The goal is for your child to look at an object that you point to. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (looking at the object you're pointing to and saying "There it is" or "I see it").

Suggested activities:

- Dressing: If your child needs help dressing, lay out his/her clothes some place within your reach and your child's reach. Start by pointing to his/her shirt and saying, "Give me your shirt." The goal is for your child to look at the shirt then hand it to you. After you have helped your child put on his/her shirt, point to his/her pants and say, "Give me your pants." You can do this with each piece of clothing as you dress your child. If your child is able to get dressed independently but has difficulty putting on his/her shoes, you can point to his/her shoe and say, "Give me your shoe?" Then do the same with the other shoe. As the child's skill increases, you can use pointing alone without the name of the object ("Give me that").
- Play Time: While putting a puzzle together, point to a piece (giraffe) and say to your child, "Give me the giraffe." As the child's skill increases, use pointing only "Give me that piece."

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 4b. Your child points to nearby objects to request them

This activity will help your child use pointing to let you know that s/he needs your help. This goal is for your child to request objects that are nearby by pointing to them. If your child requests only by using words to ask for an object, pretend that you still are not sure what s/he wants, and ask your child, “Can you point to it?” or say “This one or that one?” If the child doesn’t point, it is helpful to show your child how to point to the desired object. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (pointing to an object desired).

Suggested activities:

- **Play Time:** Roll a ball back-and-forth with your child. After passing the ball several times, hold the ball and wait. Encourage your child to point to the ball to request that you pass the ball back to him/her. Be sure that you also model pointing to the ball when your child has the ball. You can also work on requesting with train cars or blocks. For example, if your child likes to hook train cars together, give your child a couple of cars to connect and leave the others off to the side, out of your child’s reach. This may encourage your child to point to request them.
- **Shopping:** While shopping at a store, ask your child which item s/he likes. Wait for him/her to point to the object. For this activity, it is important that your child is near to the object, maybe even able to touch the object. For example, “Which pair of shoes do you like, the brown pair or the black pair?” Wait for your child to point to either the black pair of shoes or the brown pair of shoes. You can also do this activity with objects in the store that you do not plan to purchase. For example, you can encourage your child to point to a book s/he would like to look at for a few minutes before putting it back.
- **Refrigerator:** When it is time for a snack, take your child to the refrigerator, open the door, and ask what he/she wants. You can always model pointing and saying “The yogurt or the cheese?”

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 5a. Your child looks at distant objects when another person points to the objects as a request

This activity is similar to the activity for Requesting 3. It will help your child to share attention to an object that you want and to respond to your requests for assistance. The goal is for your child to look at an object that you point to. The difference between this goal and the Requesting 3 goal is that you will point to objects that are out of your reach and out of your child's reach. Around the house, you can point to any object that is out of your reach and out of your child's reach and ask for your child to give it to you. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (looking at a desired object).

Suggested activities:

- Meal Time: Point to and request a napkin, a cup, a food item
- Bath Time: Point to and request a washcloth, a bottle of shampoo, a bar of soap, a towel, a toy
- Dressing: With clothes out of your reach and your child's reach, you can point to and request any piece of clothing while dressing him/her. For example, point to the shirt and say, "Give me your shirt?"
- Play Time: Point to and request any toy that is out of reach like a puzzle piece, a block, or a doll.

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 5b. Your child points to more distant objects to request them

This activity will help your child use pointing to let you know that s/he needs your help. It is similar to Requesting 4 except that now objects are out of reach for you and for your child. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (pointing to a desired object).

Suggested activities:

- **Play Time:** Move a few of your child's toys to a location where s/he cannot reach them. For example, put the child's toys up on a shelf. Wait for your child to point to request your help with getting a specific toy off the shelf.
- **Shopping:** If you have your child at the grocery store seated in a shopping cart, ask your child "Which juice do you want?" then wait for your child to point to the juice on the shelf. You can do this with a variety of items.
- Hold up two objects well above child and say "Do you want cookies or crackers?" and encourage child to point to one desired.

Notes/Suggestions:

Requesting Goals

Requesting is an important skill. When your child learns to request, your child is beginning to communicate what s/he wants and needs. Your child is also sharing attention with you. Your child may request with words, however, your child may also make requests by reaching for toys or objects or snacks, giving toys objects to you, and to pointing to toys or objects to tell you that s/he wants, or to ask for your help. Teaching your child to use gestures (e.g., reaching, pointing) to make a request is a very important skill and a foundation to learning social-communication.

Requesting Goal 6. Your child combines a gesture and/or vocalization/verbalization with looking at person to request

After your child has successfully requested objects that are nearby and farther away using pointing, it is time to work on adding “looking at you” to the request. For example, children with autism will often point to an object and look at the object when help is needed, but not turn to look at someone else. The goal for this activity is to encourage your child to point to the object and look at you, both of which provide a clearer signal that s/he needs assistance. Your child may also make a verbal request such as, “I want that car please,” but we still want to encourage the child to look at you when requesting. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (pointing at the desired object and looking at you to get it).

Suggested activities:

- **Meal Time:** Keep items that your child will need out of reach such as silverware, a cup, or food that s/he likes. After your child points or makes a verbal request (such as, “I want milk”) wait a few seconds to encourage your child to look at you. If the child doesn’t look, hold out just a bit longer, but don’t allow the child to get too frustrated. Overall, you want the experience to be positive.
- **Dressing:** If your child is able to get dressed independently, hold his/her shirt and wait for him/her to ask you for the shirt. If your child makes a verbal request (“Can I have my shirt?”) or points at the shirt, wait a few seconds to see if your child will look at you.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 1a. Your child responds to another person giving objects just to share interest in the objects

The purpose of these activities is to encourage your child to look at an object that you are giving to him/her and/or to look at you. Extend your hand with the object in it. Before you let your child take the object out of your hand, pause to see if s/he will look up at you or the object. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (look at the object someone else gives them and/or look at the person).

Suggested activities:

- **Play Time:** Spend a few minutes stacking blocks together with your child. Select a block that is a little different, possibly in color or shape. Then hold that block in your hand and extend your hand to your child. Say, “Look at this block.” If your child doesn’t look at the block or you try again. Once your child looks at you or the block, offer the block to your child. You can do this with any toy your child likes, including toys in the bath tub.
- **Outside Time:** There are many objects in nature that are interesting to children. If you are outside playing with your child or taking a walk with your child, you can use objects from nature to work on this goal. For example, pick up a pretty or interesting leaf and hold it out to your child as you comment on what makes the leaf interesting or pretty. If your child does not look at you or the leaf, wait a few seconds before offering the leaf. Other items you can use include flowers, bugs, and interesting rocks.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

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Joint Attention Goal 1b. Your child gives objects just to share interest in the objects with another person

This goal is similar to Joint Attention 1a except that the purpose of this goal is to have your child give an object to you. These activities will encourage your child to share interest in an object by giving it to you or another person. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (give you the object they want to share with you and talk about it or point out something).

Suggested activities:

- **Play Time:** While playing with your child, ask if you can see something that your child is using. For example, if your child is playing with an elephant puppet, place your hand out and say “Can I see your elephant puppet?” Once your child gives you the puppet, examine it for a few seconds, comment about something interesting (for instance, “His fur is soft!”), then give the elephant puppet back to your child. As your child gains skill in this area, wait to see if s/he will initiate this behavior without a prompt/question.
- **Cooking:** While cooking with your child, ask your child to see something interesting they have made. For example, if your child is making cookies, say “Can I see your prettiest cookie?” After getting the cookie from your child, say something interesting about it (“The cookie is soft!”), then return the cookie to your child.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 2a. Your child responds to another person showing objects just to share interest in the objects

The purpose of these activities is to encourage your child to look at an interesting object that you are showing to him/her and then to look at you. Hold the object where your child can see it. If your child does not look at the object, hold it closer to him/her. Wait to see if your child will look at the object and then at you. If s/he does not look at you, move the object close to your face. You can also get others in the family to show your child what you expect him/her to do (look at the object you are showing and look at you).

Suggested activities:

- **Dressing:** Before helping your child put on a piece of clothing, hold it up and say something about the clothing. For example, say “Look at this alligator on your shirt!” Wait to see if your child will look at the alligator on the shirt and look at you. You can use various pieces of clothing to practice this skill as you help your child get dressed.
- **Shopping:** While shopping at the grocery store, pick up a piece of food and show it to your child while commenting about the food. For example, say “Look at this giant apple!” Wait to see if your child will look at the apple and look at you. You can use various food items to practice this skill. Try to find items that you think will be interesting to your child, such as boxes or cans with interesting pictures on them. This activity will also help teach your child the names of different food items.
- **Grab bag:** Use a paper bag to put some toys or other interesting objects (funny kitchen/bathroom gadgets) and pull them out one by one and show them to your child. You can name them or just say “Look at this.” Be silly and use some suspense when you pull them out (e.g., “Ooh, what is next?”)

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 2b. Your child shows objects just to share interest in the objects with another person

This activity is similar to Joint Attention 2a except that this activity is working on having your child show you an object just to share it with you. This activity will encourage your child to look at an object that s/he is showing to you and to look at you. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (show you the object they want to share with you and talk about it).

Suggested activities:

- **Play Time:** While your child is playing, say, “What are you playing with?” Encourage your child to hold up the object that s/he is playing with so that you can see it. For example, if your child is playing with a car, encourage him/her to hold up the car. Comment on something interesting about the car (e.g., “That car looks like it can go fast!”), smile, and let your child continue to play for little more before you encourage him/her to show you another object. Also encourage the child to show it to someone else, “Show the car to Daddy.”
- **Outside Time:** Children love to explore nature. If you see your child holding a leaf, a bug, a flower, a rock, or another item, say, “What is it?” Even if your child can tell you with words, encourage him/her to show you the object by holding it up where you can see it. When your child shows you the object, comment on something interesting about it (“That flower smells good”), smile, and let your child continue to explore for a few minutes before you encourage him/her to show you another object.
- **Grab bag game:** Using a paper sack with fun objects/toys, let your child pull out the items one by one and show them to you (and/or others). The first few times, you may want to help your child show them to others, then encourage the child to do it on their own.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 3a. Your child follows a point to nearby objects/events just to share interest in objects/events

This activity will help teach your child to follow your point to an object that is within reach. Learning to follow your point to an object will help your child share attention to an interesting object with you. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (follow your point to an interesting object or event).

Suggested activities:

- **Story Time:** While reading a book to your child, comment on what you see in the picture and point to the picture. For example, if you are reading a story about farm animals and there is a cow in the picture, point to the cow and say, "See the cow; he's eating grass." Watch your child to see if s/he looks at the picture where you pointed. You can use this activity with any book that is interesting to your child.
- **Coloring:** Use a small box of 8 crayons. Take the crayons out of the box then point to the crayons one at a time while naming the color of each crayon. For example, "Here's the red crayon; here's the orange crayon." This activity will also help your child learn the correct names for each color.
- **Counting:** Use any items that are interesting to your child. For example, cars, blocks, teddy bears, trains, or books. Line up several items then point to each item while counting. For example, line up 10 blocks. Point to the first block and say, "one," then point to the second block and say, "two," until you have touched and counted all 10 blocks. Encourage your child to count with you and to look at the blocks.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 3b. Your child points to nearby objects/events just to share interest in objects/events with another person

This activity is similar to Joint Attention 3a except that now the goal is for your child to point to an object to get your attention and share the object with you. Learning to point to objects to share them with others will help your child participate in social interactions with others and to get others to follow his/her interests. Unless your child has already shown you s/he can point, you may need to physically help form his/her fingers into a pointing gesture. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (follow your point to an interesting object or event).

Suggested activities:

- **Story Time:** While reading a book with your child, ask him/her to show you a specific part of the picture. For example, say “Where’s the dog?” Encourage your child to point to different objects throughout the story. After your child points, comment on something interesting in the picture (for example, “That dog has a long tongue”). Then let your child continue to look at the book for a little longer before you encourage him/her to show you another part of a picture. Be sure to model pointing to pictures of interest in the book yourself. Use animated expressions to draw your child’s attention to what you are pointing out (“Wow, look at that dog!”).
- **Play time:** While playing with your child, ask your child to point to an object nearby. For example, say “Where is the orange block?” or “Where is the Thomas train?” Encourage your child to point to a variety of toys. Comment on something interesting about each object pointed to by your child. Model pointing to toys/objects of interest and making a comment about them.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 4a. Your child follows a point to more distant objects/events just to share interest in the objects/events

This activity will help teach your child to follow your point to an object that is out of reach. Learning to follow your point to an object will help your child share attention with you and the object. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (follow your point to an interesting object or event).

Suggested activities:

- **Around the House:** Put one of your child's toys out of reach. Point to the toy and comment about the toy. For example, "Look at your train! How did your train get way up there?" Encourage your child to follow your point to the train. You can also point to other common household items like a photo on the wall, a spider on the ceiling, an appliance on the kitchen counter, etc.
- **Outside Time:** While playing outside with your child or going for a walk, point to objects that are out of reach. For example, point to a dog and say "Look at that cute dog." Encourage your child to follow your point to the dog. You can do this with various objects outside including a bird, squirrel, cat, mailbox, flag, car, bike, person, flower, color, leaf, etc.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 4b. Your child points to more distant objects/events just to share interest in objects/events with another person

This activity is similar to Joint Attention 4a except that now the goal is for your child to point to objects that are out of reach to get your attention and share the object with you. Learning to point to objects to share them with others will help your child participate in social interactions with others and to get others to follow his/her interests. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (follow your point to an interesting object or event).

Suggested activities:

- **Around the House:** Ask your child to tell you where things are in the house, encouraging your child to point to the objects. For example, say “where is the vacuum?” or “where is the television?” You can ask your child to identify any household items such as the couch, the towel, the dresser, clothing, etc. Comment on something interesting about any object your child points to (e.g. “I love that fluffy towel”).
- **Outside Time:** Ask your child to play “What do you see?” outside, encouraging your child to point to the objects. For example, say “Nathan, Nathan, what do you see?” Establish a routine of saying “I see a swing in front of me” or “I see a dog looking at me” similar to *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. Whenever your child points to an object, comment on something interesting about the object.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 5. Your child follows gaze of another person to objects/events just to share interest

The purpose of this activity is to encourage your child to look at something that you are looking at. For this activity, do not point to the object. Name the object and turn to look at the object. For example, say “Look at that big dog!” then turn your head and eyes to look at the dog. Encourage your child to also look at the dog. As your child’s skill in this area increases, you can try not labeling the thing you’re drawing attention to, instead saying “Look at that!” and seeing if they are able to follow your gaze. You can also get others in the family to show the child what you expect him/her to do (follow your point to an interesting object or event).

Suggested activities:

- **Outside Time:** While playing outside with your child or going for a walk, name an object and turn to look at the object. For example, say “Look at that big red bird” then turn your head and eyes to look at the bird. Encourage your child to follow your gaze to the bird. You can do this with various objects outside including a squirrel, cat, mailbox, flag, car, bike, person, flower, color, leaf, etc.
- **Shopping:** While in a store, name an object and turn your head and eyes to look at the object. For example, say “Look at those Elmo shoes” then turn your head and eyes to look at the shoes. Encourage your child to follow your gaze to the shoes. You can do this with various items including clothing, food, toys, or a baby.

Notes/Suggestions:

Joint Attention Goals

Joint attention is a very special skill. Joint attention happens when you and your child focus your attention on the same thing just because it is interesting and you want to share it with each other. The shared attention to an object or event should be purposeful and socially motivated. Some examples of joint attention are when your child shows (or gives) you an interesting object by holding it out (giving it) to you or when your child points to an interesting object and tries to get you to look at it.

Joint Attention Goal 6. Your child combines gesture and/or vocalization/verbalization with looking at person just to share interest in an object/event

The goal of this activity is to encourage your child to share an object or event with you by pointing at the object/event or telling you about the object/event AND looking at you. After naming an object or event and turning your head and eyes to look at it, encourage your child to also look at the object or event, point to it or make a comment about it, and then look back at you. Sometimes children with autism may call out the name of an object, but not use a gesture to point to it or look at the person to see if they're looking. Being able to use words, gestures, and looking when showing others objects/events is important.

Suggested activities:

- **Outside Time:** While playing outside with your child or going for a walk, name an object and wait for your child to respond. For example, say "Look at the bunny rabbit." Encourage your child to either point to the bunny rabbit or comment ("I see the bunny") and to look at you. You can do this with various objects outside, including a squirrel, cat, mailbox, flag, car, bike, person, flower, color, or leaf.
- **Special Event:** While at a special event, like fireworks, say, "Look at the pretty fireworks," then wait for your child to respond. Encourage your child to either point to the sky or comment ("it's big") and to look at you. Other examples of special events when you can work on this skill are: at a park, a playground, a restaurant that has child-friendly characters on the walls, an amusement park, farm, county or state fair, zoo, etc.
- As your child's skill improves, you can wait for something exciting to happen or make it happen ("accidentally knock an object/toy off the table") and see if your child will point it out to you. If s/he doesn't, you point and comment and look at the child ("uh oh").

Notes/Suggestions:

Exploratory Play Goals

The first play level of the ASAP program is aimed at helping your child explore, interact with, and explore a variety of toys. If you're not sure what level to begin with, give your child a variety of toys and observe what s/he does with those toys. This phase of play development results in your child using both hands to explore toys in a variety of ways.

Exploratory Play Goal 1. Your child picks up and looks at a toy

This goal is designed to help your child learn to interact with and explore a variety of toys. By modeling picking up and looking at a toy, you are helping your child create a foundation for learning how to play. Also help your child look at toys for longer periods of time by modeling moving, rotating, banging, or shaking the toy.

Suggested toys/activities:

To target this goal, it will help to have a highly engaging toy that will hold your child's interest.

- Pin wheel
- Light-up musical toys
- Trains and cars
- Kitchen gadgets (scoops, measuring cups, ladles)

Notes/Suggestions:

Exploratory Play Goals

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Exploratory Play Goal 2. Your child plays with toys using both hands together

In this goal, you are modeling for your child the various ways s/he can interact with a toy using both hands. For example, you can show your child how to spin, bang, rub, squeeze, smell and even drop a toy on the floor by holding the toy with two hands. Push buttons to activate a toy being held or turn pages in a book while holding it.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Balls
- Blocks
- Pop-up musical toys
- Books

Notes/Suggestions:

Exploratory Play Goals

The first play level of the ASAP program is aimed at helping your child explore, interact with, and explore a variety of toys. If you're not sure what level to begin with, give your child a variety of toys and observe what s/he does with those toys. This phase of play development results in your child using both hands to explore toys in a variety of ways.

Exploratory Play Goal 3: Your child plays with one toy in three or more different ways

Your child has begun to explore a variety of toys. Now you can help your child expand the number of different ways s/he can play with each toy. You can work on this at home by modeling various play acts with a single toy. For example, you can show your child how to roll, pat, and cut play dough or how to bounce and throw a small ball.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Play dough
- Ball
- Music box
- Bubbles
- Ring stack (peep through rings, put ring on arm, blow through ring, put ring on head)

Notes/Suggestions:

Relational Play Goals

Now that your child is able to explore toys and is beginning to use toys in different ways, we want to help your child play with two or more toys (or toy parts) together in various combinations. There are 3 relational play goals. We start by teaching your child to (1) take toys apart, then to (2) put toys back together, and finally to (3) put toys together in meaningful ways.

Relational Play Goal 1. Your child takes pieces of toys apart

Start by helping your child learn to take toys with pieces apart. Taking a lid off of a container, taking pieces out of a simple puzzle, or unstacking a tower of blocks, stacking rings, or nesting cups are all ways you can teach your child to take toys apart. Stack the rings on the stacker and then encourage your child to take them off the stacker. If your child begins to lose interest, be animated and take a piece off yourself, encouraging him/her to do the same.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Stacking rings
- Nesting cups
- Blocks
- Puzzles
- Barrel of Monkeys

Notes/Suggestions:

Relational Play Goals

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Relational Play Goal 2. Child puts toys together in simple ways

Now that your child is able to take toys with pieces apart, you can teach him/her to put two or more toy parts or toys together. The same toys you used to teach your child to take toys apart can be used here to teach your child to put two or more toy parts together. Making a tower of blocks, putting pieces in a puzzle, stacking rings or nesting cups are all examples of this level of play. Examples of putting two toys together are teaching your child to clean up by putting toys in a bin or bag. This skill can also be taught by putting blocks or other small toys in bins/cups/boxes/bags. Stack blocks in a small tower, knock them down, and encourage your child to build the tower back up again. Putting blocks in a row and pushing them together like a train may be fun for your child (saying “whoop whoop” for the whistle), then encourage your child to put blocks together to make his/her own train.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Stacking rings
- Nesting cups
- Blocks
- Puzzles
- Barrel of Monkeys

Notes/Suggestions:

Relational Play Goals

Now that your child is able to explore toys and is beginning to use toys in different ways, we want to help your child play with two or more toys (or toy parts) together in various combinations. There are 3 relational play goals. We start by teaching your child to (1) take toys apart, then to (2) put toys back together and finally to (3) put toys together in meaningful ways.

Relational Play Goal 3. Your child puts several toys together in specific ways

With this goal, you are helping your child learn how to combine objects and toys in specific ways. Examples of this level of relational play include sorting toys (e.g., by shape, color, or animal; gathering up all the play eating utensils) or grouping toys that go together such as putting a spoon in a cup or a lid on a pot. You can work on this goal by helping your child sort toys into specific containers during clean up. You can also show your child how to put beads on a string, or put tops on toy pots or spoons in toy cups.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Toy cooking sets (spoons, cups, pots with lids)
- Different color/shape toys (e.g., Legos ®)
- Beads and string
- Separate toy animals by size into “mommies/daddies” and “babies” or by category (horses, pigs, dogs)

Notes/Suggestions:

Functional Play Goals

Functional play is the beginning of pretending. There are 5 levels of functional play in the ASAP program. We encourage you to teach functional play by first encouraging your child to pretend with objects, then to include him/herself, dolls or action figures, and other people in the pretending. Finally, we teach your child to use simple pretend play sequences.

Functional Play Goal 1. Your child plays with toys in functional or simple pretend ways

At this level, you are teaching your child to start using toys in the way they were meant to be used. This level is the start of early pretending. You can model functional play by showing your child how to play with toy cooking sets by putting a spoon in a cup and stirring. Another example is modeling for your child how to push a toy car along a pretend road or move a train around a track.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Cars
- Boats
- Trains
- Toy cooking sets
- Dinosaur (eats, sleeps, growls, swims)

Notes/Suggestions:

Functional Play Goals

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Functional Play Goal 2. Your child plays with toys in simple pretend ways directed to self

In targeting this goal, you are now helping your child take on more of a role in his/her pretend play. Examples of this level of play are pretending to feed him/herself with a spoon or a bottle, brushing his/her own hair with a toy brush, or giving him/herself a shot when playing with a toy doctor kit.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Toy cooking sets
- Sand toys
- Brushes
- Combs
- Baby bottles
- Toy doctor kit

Notes/Suggestions:

Functional Play Goals

Functional play is the beginning of pretending. There are 5 levels of functional play in the ASAP program. We encourage you to teach functional play by first encouraging your child to pretend with objects, then to include him/herself, dolls or action figures, and other people in the pretending. Finally, we teach your child to use simple pretend play sequences.

Functional Play Goal 3. Your child includes a doll/action figure in simple pretend play with toys

The goal of this step is to help your child expand his/her pretend play to dolls and stuffed animals. At this level, you are helping your child start to include a doll or some other figure (e.g., dinosaur, stuffed animal) into his/her pretend play. Examples of this level are the child feeding a doll with a spoon or bottle, brushing or diapering a doll, and feeding a dinosaur, making it sleep, or making it swim.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Dolls/action figure/stuffed animal
- Brushes
- Combs
- Play diapers
- Toy kitchen set
- Doctor/veterinary set

Notes/Suggestions:

Functional Play Goals

Functional play is the beginning of pretending. There are 5 levels of functional play in the ASAP program. We encourage you to teach functional play by first encouraging your child to pretend with objects, then to include him/herself, dolls or action figures, and other people in the pretending. Finally, we teach your child to use simple pretend play sequences.

Functional Play Goal 4. Your child includes other people in simple pretend play with toys

In the previous goal, your child was learning to include dolls or stuffed animals in his/her pretend play. In this goal, you are helping your child learn to include other people in the pretending. You can work on this goal by encouraging your child to pretend to feed you with a spoon or bottle, put a toy Band-Aid® on your pretend 'boo-boo,' or put a toy phone to your ear.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Kitchen sets
- Doctor/veterinary set
- Comb
- Brush
- Bottle
- Toy phone

Notes/Suggestions:

Functional Play Goals

Functional play is the beginning of pretending. There are 5 levels of functional play in the ASAP program. We encourage you to teach functional play by first encouraging your child to pretend with objects, then to include him/herself, dolls or action figures, and other people in the pretending. Finally, we teach your child to use simple pretend play sequences.

Functional Play Goal 5. Your child uses the same action in simple pretend play with two different people or dolls/figures

Now that your child has started to include other people and dolls/figures in his/her pretend play, you can help him/her learn to incorporate more than one other person or doll at a time. An example of this level of play would be having your child feed you and then feed a doll with a spoon or bottle or having your child feed you and your spouse with a spoon. You can also work on this goal by having your child put a doll to sleep and then put a dinosaur to sleep, or give a stuffed dog a shot and then a stuffed rabbit a shot.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Dolls/action figure
- Toy kitchen set
- Doctor/veterinary set
- Brushes
- Combs
- Diapers

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 1. Your child makes doll/figure move or do things as if it were alive

You may have noticed that this goal is similar to *Functional Play Goal 3* at the functional play level in that it involves having your child include a doll or action figure in his/her play. However, this goal is a higher level in that *we now want your child to do the moving and talking for the doll/action figure*. For example, you may have worked on Functional Play Goal 3 with your child by having your child feed a dinosaur a cookie while you manipulated the dinosaur by "roaring" or "chewing." For Symbolic Play Goal 1, you now want your child to "roar" and "chew" for the dinosaur while you or your child feed it a cookie. You can work on this goal by having your child act as the doll and feed you or another doll, for example.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Dolls
- Puppets
- Stuffed animals
- Toy animals/actions figures
- Toy foods
- Cooking set
- Toy medical kit

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 2. Your child does 2 different pretend actions, one right after another, with the same toy

In this goal, you are helping your child start to expand his/her play by putting different pretend steps together. An example of this would be to have your child feed a doll and then put it to bed. You can think of this kind of play as building steps in a story. You can work on this by modeling 2-step pretend sequences for your child, such as driving a toy car around and then putting it in a garage, blowing out pretend candles and eating the cake, or stirring a spoon in an empty bowl and then pretending to eat the food.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Toy kitchen set
- Toy doctor kit
- Dolls/action figures
- Cars, trucks, and trains

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 3. Your child does 3 or more different pretend actions, one right after another, with the same toy

This goal is a continuation of the last goal. Continue to build the play "story" by adding a 3rd step. If you have been modeling stirring a spoon in a bowl and then pretending to eat, for example, you can now add in a third step to the pretending to make a 3-part sequence: stirring with a spoon, blowing on the spoon, and then eating. Other examples are: driving the truck to the cement plant, pretending to put cement in the truck, and then driving the truck back to a house; or making the toy school bus drive down the road, pick up the children, and drop them off at school.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Toy kitchen set
- Toy doctor kit
- Dolls/action figures
- Cars, trucks, and trains

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play 4. Your child uses one toy/object to represent or stand for another

In this goal, aim to teach your child to use one object or toy to represent something else. For example, you can model for your child pretending that a block is a cookie and feed it to a doll. Or you can pretend a shoebox is a boat and put some figures inside to go for a ride. You can also play cashier and "ring up" blocks to represent various sale items or have animals eat small pieces of paper as food.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Blocks, shoeboxes and cups to use to stand for other objects
- Doll/action figure/stuffed animal
- Various toy sets (e.g., kitchen set, cash register, farm set)

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 5. Your child uses pretend qualities in play

In this goal, you expand your child's imaginary play by teaching him/her how to give the toys pretend characteristics. Toy food and kitchen sets provide many opportunities for this level of play. For example, you can model for your child that the toy pizza is "hot" or that a toy ice cream cone is "cold." Pretending that something has spilled or is leaking and needs to be cleaned up is another way to target this goal. Also, pretending toy foods are "yummy" or "yucky," pretending a diaper is "wet," pretending a road is "bumpy," acting as if toy food is "sticky," or pretending a shoe is "muddy" are other examples of this level of play.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Toy foods
- Dolls/action figures
- Diapers
- Shoes

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 6. Your child uses pretend objects in play

At a previous level, your child learned to substitute a toy or object to represent something else (e.g., a block represented a cookie). Now you want to expand your child's pretend play to include imaginary objects. To target this goal, you can model using an "invisible" wrench to fix a toy car (or drive to a pretend garage), feed a doll an invisible pizza, or stop a car or train at an invisible stop sign. Other examples might include holding up your hand as an imaginary phone and shaking your fist to pour imaginary sprinkles on a toy cupcake.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Cars
- Dolls
- Toy animals
- Toy foods
- Cooking items

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 7. Your child takes on a pretend role in play that other people direct

In this goal, you give your child a role to take on in pretending. For example, you can have your child be the train conductor and you can be the passenger. As these pretend play scenarios become more familiar to your child, you can then trade roles (e.g., s/he can be the passenger and you be the train conductor) and add new roles (e.g., to the pretend game). For example, you could pretend to be a shopper/store clerk, fast food restaurant diner/check out person, or doctor/patient.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Cash register
- Store items
- Dress up hats and props (e.g., fire hat, construction hat)
- Large cardboard boxes for trains/cars/busses
- Doctor kit

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 8. Your child suggests pretend roles in play to self or other people

Now that your child is familiar with taking a role suggested by you, you want your child to start giving *you* a role to play in pretending. When you decide what type of pretend adventure to have with your child (e.g., McDonald's drive-thru) you can ask your child what you should do and what s/he will do.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Cash register
- Store items
- Dress up hats and props (e.g., fire hat, construction hat)
- Large cardboard boxes for trains/cars/buses
- Doctor kit

Notes/Suggestions:

Symbolic Play Goals

Symbolic play is a high level of pretending. In targeting symbolic play, aim to help your child start to do things like pretending that toys are alive (dinosaurs eat, dolls talk/walk), using one object to stand for another (block for piece of food, finger as toothbrush), pretending that objects have qualities they don't ("hot" toy food), using pretend objects (holding hand like a cup and drinking), and taking on pretend roles in play (acting as the teacher or doctor). These are fun skills to work on with your child!

Symbolic Play Goal 9. Your child expands pretend play with other people into (a) new roles, (b) new themes, (c) fantasy roles

Now that your child is able to play different roles during play, the goal is to help your child learn to take on different roles that could be in the same theme, a different theme, or a fantasy. If you have been playing doctor/patient, encourage your child to play different roles (e.g., child, older person, nurse, checkout person). If it's an action figure like Dora the Explorer, help your child think of new roles, add new themes, or add more imaginary parts. During pretend play with your child, add other characters. For example, while playing store suggest that your child take on the role of the stock boy/girl or an angry customer.

Suggested toys/activities:

- Action figures/dolls
- Toy kitchen or store
- Dress up clothes
- Forts and pretend places (sandy area of yard as a beach)

Notes/Suggestions: