



PLAY: Symbolic 4 [S4]

Child uses one toy/object to represent or stand for another

Purpose

- To teach your child to use one object or toy to represent something else.

Description

This occurs when the child uses an object/toy to represent something else. Using an object to stand for a different object shows the child is starting to understand that objects can symbolize something else in play routines.

- Pretends a block is a piece of pizza
- Pretends his/her finger is a toothbrush
- Pretends a piece of cardboard is a mirror

Activities

- *Playtime:* Pretend that toys like blocks or balls are food and have a stuffed animal or action figure “eat” them. Play cashier and “ring up” blocks to represent various sale items or use colored paper as “money.” Pretend a shoebox is a boat and put some figures inside to go for a ride. Make a train out of blocks. Pretend plastic cups are hats. Make a pool or lake out of a piece of string.
- *Outside Time:* Bring the kitchen set outside and use rocks or pine straw as “ingredients” as your child “cooks”



Strategies

- *Model play with animation* – be loud and silly as you demonstrate for your child substituting one item for another in play (for example, pretend a banana is a phone, tissue is blanket for baby). Exaggerate your excitement when the child substitutes one item for another in play.
- *Expand to show my child the next developmental step* – pretend that the same object represents another item into a preferred play activity (for example, pretending that a banana is now a microphone)

Suggested Toys

- Blocks
- Stacking cups
- Boxes
- Kitchen toys

Goal Mastery

An ASAP Goal is mastered if your child meets ALL of the following criteria:

- Shows the skill at least three times
- Shows the skill during different activities or in different settings such as during snack time, during playtime, or at the grocery store.
- Shows the skill with minimal help or support from an adult