

# Help Sheet

0 – 25 Specialist Teaching And Support Service

## How to support play skills by using developmentally appropriate toys.

### Why?

- Children responded positively to developmentally appropriate toys.
- Children with SEND often have sensory preferences which influences which toys they like to play with.
- Some toys support children to explore their preferred schema. In simple terms, schemas are 'patterns of play' that help children to develop their knowledge and understanding about how things work. Some schemas will fulfil a child's sensory needs as well as being exploratory learning.



### You will need:

- To speak to the child's parents to find out the type of toys and books the child engages with at home.
- To use the Early Years Development Journal to understand the child's stage of development and provide toys that support 'next steps'.
- To observe patterns of play and which toys the child responds well to.

### How?

#### To support engagement with books provide:

- Lift the flap books.
- Books with sound buttons.
- Board and simple picture books.
- Books linked to the interests of the child / cohort.

#### To support children that seek sensory input provide:

- Light-up toys.
- Toys with moving parts e.g. spinning toys, pop-up toys.
- Toys that make noises and musical instruments.
- Build up and knock down toys.
- Tactile toys e.g. koosh ball, poppit, stretchy toys.



### To support schemas provide:

Schema	Toys / Resources
Connection	fastenings board, construction kits, loose parts, magnetic toys, pipes and funnels
Enclosing	nesting dolls or cups, blankets, containers with lids, junk modelling, materials to make boarders e.g. lolly sticks, coloured tape, chalk
Enveloping	items to wrap and wrapping, large boxes to play inside, dens, nesting toys, toys with doors
Orientation	magnifiers, binoculars, mirrors and mirrored toys
Positioning	magnetic shapes, pattern tiles, threading, peg boards, eggboxes and items to put in the compartments
Posting	post boxes, balls and drainpipes, piggybanks, shape sorters, inset jigsaws
Rotating	cog toys, kaleidoscopes, spinning toys, toys that roll, locks and keys, balls
Tipping	build up and knock down toys, messy play e.g. rice, lentils, sand, oats
Trajectory	bubbles, balls, toys with a target, roll or pour objects down guttering, ribbon sticks, skittles, watering cans
Transforming	dough, slime, liquid motion toys, glitter bottles, lightbox and translucent toys
Transporting	wheelbarrows, pushchairs, bags, buckets, watering cans

### To support the early stages of imaginative play provide:

- A home corner which is available all year round.
- Dressing-up clothes.
- Large dolls, prams, cots, highchairs.
- Large soft toy 'pets', food bowls, pet toys, pet beds.

### Things to note:

Think about the progression of toys e.g. the skill of posting starts with a wide slot, progresses to a narrow slot and extends to a shaped slot.

### Reference / Evidence base – informed by:

Jean Piaget, Psychologist – Piaget's Theory 1952  
Chris Athey, Lecturer in Education – The Froebel Early Education Project 1973-78  
Tina Bruce, Honorary Professor in Early Childhood Education – The Froebel Block Play Project 1987  
Understanding Schemas in Young Children Again! Again! – Sally Featherstone