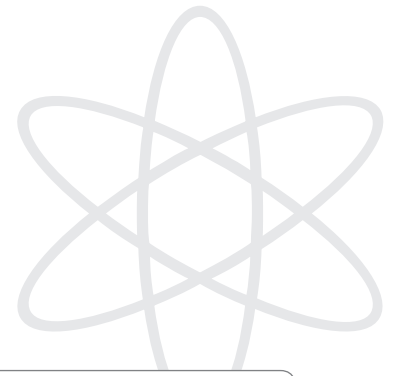


# 'Letting my child take the lead in play' handout 1 of 2



## Think

When I am playing with my child, who is usually in charge of the play? Is it my child or is it me?

Why might it be helpful to allow my child to take the lead in play?

What do I need to 'do more of', or 'do differently', in order to let my child lead the play?

Why we may be tempted to take charge of the child's play:

- ✧ If the child is sitting there not doing much
- ✧ If the activity is quite difficult and it is hard to watch a child struggle to do something
- ✧ Because we want to teach the child something
- ✧ Because we quite like to get our own way!

Why might it be helpful to allow my child to take the lead in play?

- ✧ It will help to keep the play at the child's level. He'll be choosing what he wants to do and this means he's less likely to be putting himself under pressure to do something which is too hard for him.
- ✧ It will help to keep the play at the child's pace – he can do things as quickly or slowly as he likes and he won't feel the need to try to keep up with somebody else.
- ✧ There will be more freedom for the child since he won't be following the adult's way of doing things.
- ✧ There is more opportunity for the child to develop:
  - Problem-solving skills
  - Play skills
  - Imagination
  - Self-confidence

What do I need to 'do more of' or 'do differently' in order to let my child lead the play?

**STOP! LOOK! LISTEN!** (not just useful for road safety!)

## Letting my child take the lead in play **2 of 2**

### 1 Stop!

Don't be in a hurry to do things for him. He might surprise you with what he is able to do, so wait and see what he does.

### 2 Look!

Look at what your child does with the toys. It might not be what you think it should be! Let him use play to learn and explore. Remember there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to do it. Try not to give him commands or instructions.

### 3 Listen!

Accept his ideas.

### 4 Think about what you are saying!

Remember that adults direct play through what they say as well as by what they do. Instead of telling your child what to do, try to...

- ✧ Comment on what he is doing, or about what is happening in the play.

For example: *'That's the kettle – for making tea. You're putting water in now – I see. Lots of water. Oh look, it's full!'*

- ✧ Respond to what he says.

For example: playing with dolls

Child: *'Baby goes there. Baby in bed.'*

Parent: *'Yes, baby is sleeping. She's tired.'*

- ✧ Repeat his idea back to him.

For example: building with Lego®

Child: *'That's where the driver sits.'*

Parent: *'The driver sits there... I see.'*

- ✧ Add to his idea.

For example: playing with farm set

Child: *'There's the tractor.'*

Parent: *'The farmer is driving the tractor. He's going into the field.'*

To follow my child's lead I need to:



Stop



Look



Listen



Comment and respond

Have a go at letting him take the lead in play!