



PLAY PROJECT ACTIVITIES BY LEVEL

Level 1: Self-Regulation & Shared Attention (calm and alert and ready for the possibility of engagement)

Goal: To help the child sustain attention and regulation (create an optimal environment while eliminating distractions)

*some activities may be appropriate for more than one level

Activities:

Sensory motor play

- Roll exercise ball on body
- Massage with or without lotion
- Gently squeeze fingers/toes, head
- Gently shake arm/leg/hands/feet
- Dance while holding the child
- Tickle the child's arms, back, belly, etc.
- Sing
- Make sounds
- Make faces to capture the child's attention
- Be with child
- Use music to calm or arouse the child
- Gently and rhythmically pound on the back

Level 2: Engagement & Relating

Goal: To engage with the child and maintain continuous engagement

Activities:

- Play peek-a-boo with your hands
- Sing to the child and pause for his/her engagement
- Label what the child is doing
- Cuddle with the child
- Tickle child
- Water play
- Rice and beans
- Cooked spaghetti
- Playdough
- Play with bean bags
- Squishy balls
- Swing child in blanket by arms and legs
- Use toys or mirrors to capture child's interest
- Horsy back rides
- Flying the child up in the air
- Holding the child upside down for a brief period
- Wrestle gently
- Introduce simple 1-2 step sequences and opposites: turn a flashlight on and off, turn water on and off, hello/goodbye games, open and dramatically close a book, etc.

Level 3: Two-Way Intentional Communication

Goal: To open and close circles with the child and to challenge the child to initiate

Activities:

- Begin to sing a song and then wait for the child to finish
- Run together
- Dance together
- Jump together



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- Blow bubbles and wait for the child to ask for more
- Balloon play (i.e. hitting a balloon back and forth or blowing one up and letting it fly around the room, etc.)
- Label body parts and wait for the child's direction ("What's next?")
- Swing or pull child in blanket
- Use blanket as parachute
- Fly like an airplane and crash into a couch
- Flip the child over on a bed, crawl through a tunnel
- Wait for the child on the other side, etc.
- Play simple chase games
- Ready-set-go or 1-2-3 games
- Obstructive play: block the child during repetitive play or play keep-away
- Stack blocks and knock them over
- Jack-in-the-Box
- Play with toys that wind up and go, such as cars, airplanes, helicopters, etc.
- Play with squirt guns or water balloons
- Play peek-a-boo around a blanket or behind a door
- Use motivating activities (e.g. snack time or going outside) to encourage initiation and gestural communication

Level 4: Purposeful Problem-Solving Communication

Goal: To engage in long, back and forth interactions that includes meaningful communication, problem solving, simple pretend play and sequences

Activities:

- Use animal shaped cut-outs
- Drive cars in playdough
- Use characters/action figures to squish in the play dough
- Roll in the paint
- Play with playdough
- Play with putty
- Finger paint
- Ask the child to point to various body parts on his/her body and on play partner's body
- Introduce animal/car sounds
- Ask child to repeat sounds
- Pretend to talk on the phone (e.g. "Hello, who is there?")
- Do puzzles and playing with shapes and colors that have meaning to the child - keep it playful!
- Play opposite games with some simple pretend (e.g. lights on/off, cars in/out of garage)
- Simple puppet play (i.e. making puppets open their mouths and say, "Ahh" or "Hi!")
- Play simple hide-and-seek behind a blanket or furniture
- Look at books, talk about pictures on the page
- Ask simple what/where questions
- Push trains/cars around a track



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- Tug-o-war
- “Ring Around the Rosy,” “Head-Shoulders-Knees-Toes,” “Humpty-Dumpty,” “London Bridges,” etc.
- Give the child simple problems to solve (e.g. the car is stuck, the horsey has a boo-boo, the baby is hungry, etc.)

Level 5: Creating & Elaborating Ideas

Goal: To encourage a better understanding of one’s emotions and to increase pretend play, symbolic thinking, conversational and negotiation skills

Activities:

- Races with simple rules
- Play red-light green-light
- Play catch
- Color together and talk about what you are coloring
- Puppet play (i.e. making puppets talk and interact on a symbolic level)
- Use mock anger, pretend crying, pretend to be afraid, etc.
- Set the table with pretend food
- Wash a pretend animal
- Change a doll’s diaper and put it to bed
- Have a tea party
- Play doctor
- Act out simple stories
- Hide-and-seek
- Bean bag toss
- Catch/tackle football
- Kick soccer ball
- Sword fight
- Crocodile Dentist
- Don't Break the Ice
- Don't Spill the Beans
- Build a house/building of blocks
- Make a puppet burp
- Pretend to fall and say "ow!"
- Simple Simon Says
- Play dress-up based on familiar characters or animals
- Simple Follow the Leader
- Play board games (less than two rules)
- Ask open ended questions
- Encourage peer play/semi-structured play dates

Level 6: Building Bridges & Ideas (Logical Thinking)

Goal: To support the child in understanding complex emotions: concepts of time, fairness, and abstraction. To support the child in engaging peers and adults in complex pretend scenarios while appropriately responding to the feelings and ideas of all involved. To help the child make associations between ideas.

Activities:

- iSpy
- Role play with puppets/stuffed animals
- Tell knock-knock jokes
- Play tag
- Hot potato
- Musical chairs
- Duck-duck goose
- Guessing games
- Play house
- Go on a pretend picnic
- Go on a pretend adventure
- Go on treasure hunts
- Go on scavenger hunts



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- Complete complex obstacle courses
- Play charades with various emotions and actions
- Read and analyze stories/books
- Talk about movies and character roles
- Have the child tell stories
- Tic-tac-toe
- Simon Says
- Sports with rules
- Candyland
- Chutes and Ladders
- Go Fish
- Bingo
- Memory
- Guess Who?
- Ask advanced why, when and how questions
- Take quizzes/complete complex puzzles/play trivia
- Discuss weekend plans/trips
- Talk about friends
- Discuss similarities between people, objects and places
- Talk about likes and dislikes
- Discuss how plants grow in nature
- Discuss where water comes from
- Talk about how things (refrigerators, washers) work
- Talk about why eating, drinking, sleeping is important
- Introduce moral dilemmas
- Give examples of conflict, rejection, sarcasm, deception, etc.
- Discuss how/why perspectives differ
- Model/practice sympathy vs empathy vs apathy and how they apply to various situations
- Encourage unstructured play times with peers, siblings and older/younger children