

Role Play

Play in the EYFS

Fully revised and updated to reflect the 2012 EYFS

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With contribution from Naomi Compton, head of early years and childcare, Derbyshire
and Sheila Sage, early years inspector, Worcestershire (pages 2-11).

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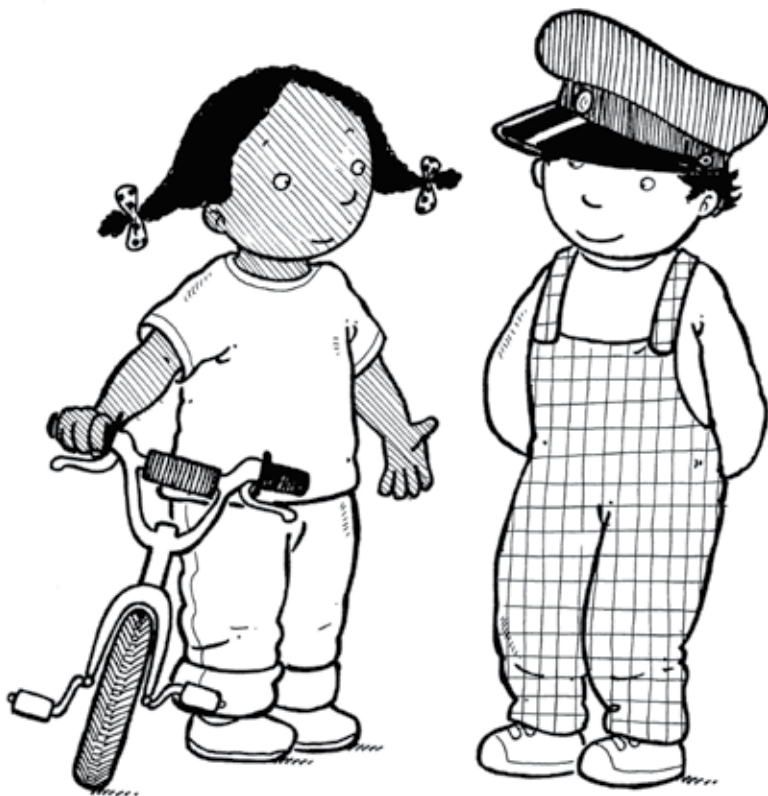
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The value of role play

Do you make the most of your role-play area? With some thought about the purpose of role play, some careful planning and sensitive intervention, role play can be the most exciting learning experience in your setting.

Every area of the curriculum can be taught through good quality role play. Children can:

- learn to share and take turns
- use their imaginations
- explore situations from their own or another person's perspective
- develop self-confidence and self-esteem
- express ideas, feelings and anxieties
- feel valued, listened to and taken seriously
- learn to collaborate with other children and with adults
- play a part in observing and assessing both their own and others learning
- take risks, solve problems and make decisions



Think about it...

The value of role play is nearly always increased if children have had the chance to experience the real situation before the scenario is set up. It may be possible to arrange a visit, for example to your local clinic or shops, and ask permission for the children to talk to some of the staff. Some expert adults are willing to come in and talk to children about their work, demonstrating equipment and techniques.

- have the chance to develop their own ideas and explore what they want to know
- construct and restructure their understanding of the world
- learn about the culture of others and develop a greater understanding of their own culture
- learn more about relationships
- overcome their fears (for example, of the dark or of hospitals or doctors).

The value of play can be seen in children's concentration and the depth of their exploration. Children learn best when they are interested in what they are doing and role play offers that chance for them to be completely absorbed.

Playing is not a break from learning, and there should be rigour in play which demands and challenges children to develop their learning. This means that there needs to be negotiation between adults and children. By working together as partners in planning, proposing and decision-making, you can make both the teaching and learning more productive.

Role play provides a link between free and directed play but you need to make sure that positive intervention does not become pointless interfering. Sometimes adults can challenge to invigorate the play and sometimes

Managing role play

Who 'role plays'?

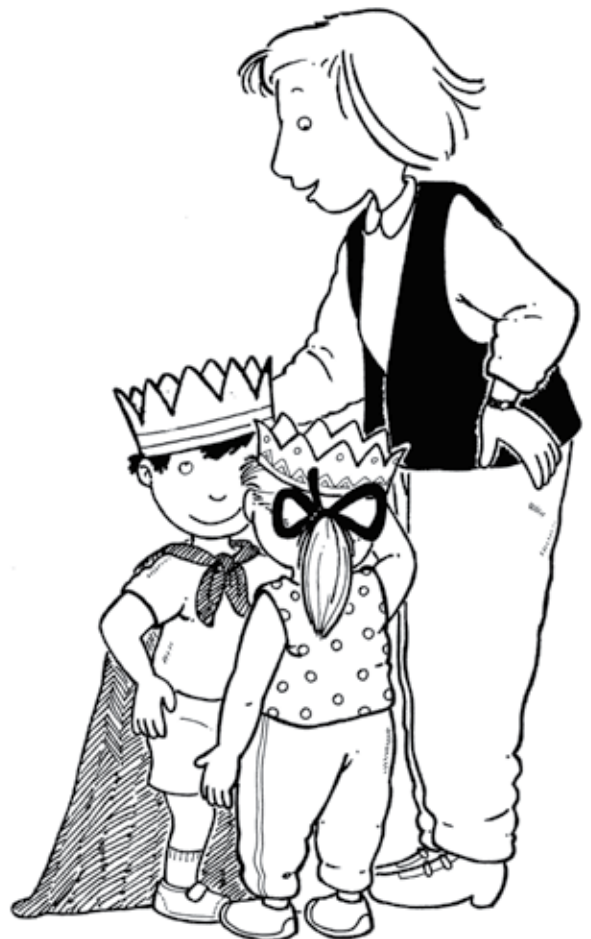
Children may role play on their own, in pairs, in small groups or in large groups. Who is involved in the play changes the dynamics. Role-play situations may allow children to develop relationships with children that they do not usually choose to work with.

Both adults and children need to be involved, but not necessarily in the same ways. Children should sometimes have the opportunity to lead role-play situations without feeling restricted by adults. How children are encouraged to join or persuaded to have a turn can affect the play and their involvement. Some children are not confident about approaching role play and will need encouragement from an adult or their peers. Children instinctively value the importance of play, but some will need more encouragement to be involved than others. Some adults might need help to see that it is not silly and is certainly not a waste of time.

Make sure that all children are able to participate actively within the role-play area. All children should benefit regardless of their gender, ethnicity or ability.

Role play encourages children to develop as individuals and allows both the more- and less-able to take part. Differences in children's abilities should not result in a less valuable experience. Role play is ideal for challenging children to develop and enrich their learning because it is dependent upon process rather than a race for a product. Through role play children learn about how to manage differences between people and are able to ask questions and explore this concept.

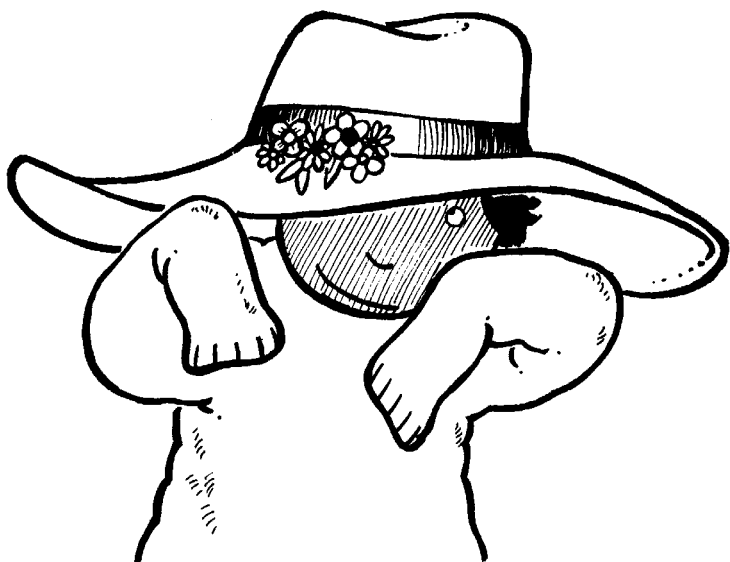
Bear in mind that the organisation of resources can affect the development of play, particularly for some children, who will not be able to join in if the resources are too cluttered or the furniture is too close together. Other children may feel overwhelmed by the amount of resources or if the resources do not fit in with their particular way of learning. Talk with the children about the resources they



Think about it...

- How do children get involved in planning a situation? If they have, are they then more interested in being the ones who use it?
- When role play takes place outside any defined area or situation. Is it part of a story, daily contact, in conversation or incidental?
- Do children play more when they can choose the context, time and the grouping?
- Are they more interested, and is play developed differently, if the children choose the activity rather than you?
- Do children return – or are they encouraged to return- to refine, conclude, or develop play situations?

Links with the 2012 Early Years Foundation Stage



To help you with your planning, all of the activities suggested for each role-play area are listed under the seven areas of learning, both **prime** and **specific**.

These pages highlight 'Development matters' in the 2012 Early Years Foundation Stage – subdivided into the seven areas of learning – and show what children are expected to be able to do in each early learning goal by the time they enter Year 1.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development (Prime area)

Making relationships

Children play cooperatively, taking turns with others. They take account of one another's ideas about how to organise their activity. They show sensitivity to others' needs and feelings, and form positive relationships with adults and other children.

Self-confidence and self-awareness

Children are confident to try new activities, and say why they like some activities more than others. They are confident to speak in a familiar group, will talk about

their ideas, and will choose the resources they need for their chosen activities. They say when they do or don't need help.

Managing feelings and behaviour

Children talk about how they and others show feelings, talk about their own and others' behaviour, and its consequences, and know that some behaviour is unacceptable. They work as part of a group or class, and understand and follow the rules. They adjust their behaviour to different situations, and take changes of routine in their stride.

Communication and language (Prime area)

Listening and attention

Children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity.

Understanding

Children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' or 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events.

Speaking

Children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events.

Café or restaurant

(Adapt to be a hotel or pizza delivery service)

Working and eating out in the role-play café or restaurant appeals to most children, especially if you can combine it with cooking and eating real food! Suitable themes include Food, Seasons and Materials.

What you will need

- For dressing up: uniforms, aprons, chef's hat
- Several small tables and chairs
- Tablecloths, napkins, vases and flowers
- Plates, bowls, cups and saucers, glasses
- Knives, forks and spoons
- Notepad and pencil
- Printed menus
- Cooking utensils, pots and pans
- Cooker, sink, fridge, play kitchen furniture
- Telephone
- Cash till, money
- Leaflets advertising cafés
- Food plastic, salt dough (see below) and real!
- Fast food option take-away boxes and cups. (Most fast food outlets will supply you with a selection of these on request)
- Ingredients for cooking.

Next step

- Add on a bedroom, provide luggage and open a hotel.
- Add a pizza delivery service with bicycle or scooter, helmet, boxes, menu and street map.
- Close down the restaurant due to staff holidays, for redecoration or too many complaints and disastrous environmental health inspections!

Things to make and do

- Make pretend food using a variety of materials – salt dough biscuits, cakes, sausages and chicken legs.
- Cut cakes and chips out of yellow sponge foam.
- Make pizzas from cardboard circles and collage materials.
- Make favourite meals using paper plates, photos of food from magazines, or collage materials.



Setting up

- Decide with children what sort of café they want to setup – fast food take-away or sit down at tables. Do they want fish and chips, Chinese or Indian food, pizzas, a teashop or a posh restaurant? There are lots of options!
- Use two or three small tables, laid out with table cloths and place settings.
- Use a portable screen to separate off a kitchen area and arrange kitchen furniture.

Starting off

- Talk to children about their experiences of eating out. These will vary enormously.
- **Read:** *The Tiger who Came to Tea* by Judith Kerr (Harper Collins). What do they like/not like about eating in a café?
- Explain that you are opening the café on a certain day. Ask children to come dressed up, if appropriate. Provide some real food to share in the café.
- **Safety:** Take care not to rush around when people are carrying trays/drinks.
- **Roles:** Manager, waiter/waitress, head chef, sous chef, dishwasher, customer.