

Emerging Play Stages

Play Stage	Description
Sensory Exploration Play	The young child uses his/her senses to “explore” objects in the same undifferentiated way with repetitive movements. S/he may repeat movements with 2 objects (bang cup/spoon together) for sensory response.
Functional Play	The child manipulates objects in a functional manner (e.g., pressing keys on a keyboard, activating a busy box), and then combines objects (put balls in/out of containers). Self directed imitation begins (holds cup to her mouth)
Constructive Play	The child begins to sort and build with various objects. Materials are used in simple and then more complex ways. Creative expression begins to emerge.
Pretend Play	The child begins to create situations (drive a car to a gas station, give “medicine” to a “sick” friend). S/he then engages in play where objects take on new purposes (boxes become cars).