

Exploring stories through play

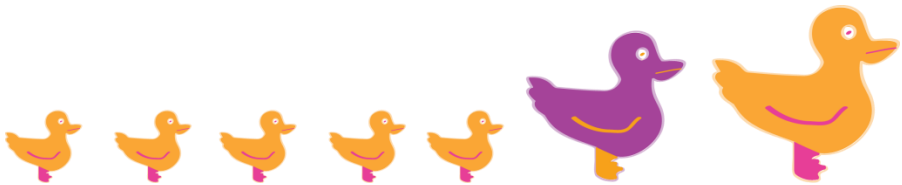
Children often use familiar stories in their play. You may have seen them acting out stories – telling them in their own words and using things around them as props.

Children love pretending – especially pretending to be grown up! Exploring stories through play encourages their imagination and is an important part of finding out about themselves and making sense of their world.

Stories to play with

Children often use what they know from familiar books as a starting point in their play and may even make up their own versions. Stories don't just have to come from books – favourite songs and rhymes make great stories to play with and explore

Have you heard the one about the five little ducks that went swimming one day?!

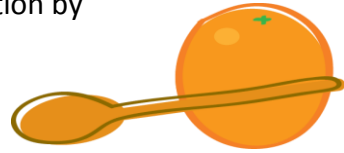


Children can use other stories when they play too – perhaps ones they know from television programmes, movies or even real stories that come from their everyday experiences.

The more stories that children hear, the more they will come to understand how stories work, and the more fun they will be able to have when playing with them.

Using props

You can encourage your child's imagination by offering them toys and even everyday household items to help them bring their stories to life.



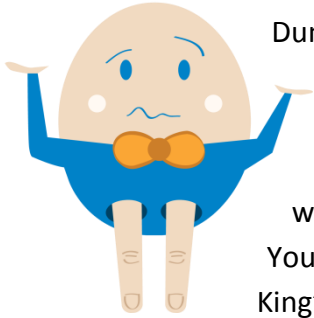
Children sometimes use a toy or object to represent something else when they play. You might have noticed them pushing a wooden block along the floor as a car, or using a brush as a mobile phone. Being able to use one object to represent another is an important stage which happens before children are able to understand that written symbols can represent sounds, words and ideas.

Knowing your child's favourite story, rhyme or movie character can help you to choose some simple props for them to use as part of their play. These don't have to be 'real' props – your child will enjoy using their imagination with lots of different things. Here are some ideas:

- a blanket to use as a cape for a superhero
- a stick as a light sabre
- a bowl and wooden spoon makes a great drum – or for mixing magic potions!
- A favourite doll and three different sized teddies, plastic bowls with spoons, with recycled boxes for beds can bring Goldilocks and the Three Bears to life.



You can make a really simple puppet to go with your child's favourite nursery rhyme. Try making Humpty Dumpty by cutting out an egg shape from card, then making two round holes toward the bottom for your child to put their fingers through for his legs. A piece of folded card with bricks drawn on it will make a good wall. You can join in too by pretending to be 'all the King's horses and men' charging in to help!



Children sometimes get lost in their own worlds when they are making up stories and it can be great for them to play imaginatively on their own. At other times, they will like you to join in and be part of the story too.

Story bags

Story bags contain a storybook along with a variety of items relating to the story that children can explore and play with. You can usually borrow them from the library, but it can be fun to make your own.

Try making a homemade story bag for your child's favourite book. You could use a gift bag or pillowcase for your 'bag'. Here are some ideas of things to include:

- props, toys and/or puppets to bring the story to life
- an information or factual book related to the story
- a simple game
- an activity



Your child will enjoy helping to decide what goes in the bag too!

Building confidence

Children need to know a story really well before they can play with it.

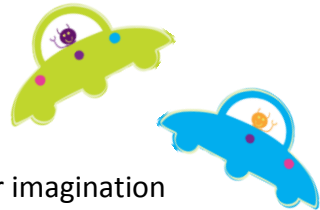
It helps children to get to know a story if they can join in when you are reading or singing together. As they get to know it, they may start to tell it themselves – perhaps in their own words. When children know a story well, they will be confident enough to explore it as part of their play.

Try talking to your child about their story and encouraging them to think about what happens next. You might find that a whole new story appears as their imagination takes over and they start to use their own storytelling skills!



Playing with stories gives children confidence and helps them to:

- use props and movements to bring stories to life
- tell stories in their own words – perhaps using remembered words and phrases
- think about what happens next
- practise putting events into order
- explore new possibilities using their imagination
- extend their knowledge and understanding of their world
- recognise that stories have authors



Exploring stories through play helps children develop the skills to become confident readers and writers.