

# Let's Pretend

## A Parents' Guide to Encouraging Your Child to Pretend Play



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**Encourage Your Child to Pretend Play By Making Costumes Together.**  
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# Introduction

Do you remember how much fun you had as a child dressing up or playing with puppets? Pretend play is an important part of every child's development. It allows them to make sense of the world around them and of course it is a great way for them to "try out" and practice the different roles and responsibilities they will have as adults.

Unfortunately today's society doesn't encourage pretend play. Our children spend hours each day watching television, playing video games, and taking organized classes to give them a head start for school. There isn't much time left for pretend play, and quite frankly, many kids don't know how...

That's why we've created this guide for you. It will help you understand why it is so important for your child's cognitive and social development to pretend play and how you can encourage your child to tap into her creative potential by introducing pretend play into your home.

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# Why Pretend Play Is So Important For Your Child

Our world has grown increasingly complex over the past 100 years. We developed from a small town, mostly agrarian society into today's high-tech, highly specialized world.

Even our family structures have grown increasingly more complex with divorces, remarriage and the stepmothers, fathers, siblings and grandparents associated with that.

In short, the world our children grow up in has become pretty complicated to grasp for them.

What does pretend play have to do with all this? Pretend play is a way for our children to practice living as a grown-up. It allows them to take on different roles and make sense of the different views and behaviors associated with that behavior.

Pretend play is also a great way for a child to work through situations that he or she doesn't completely understand or that may even worry or scare him or her.

At the same time, watching your children play pretend is the perfect way to get a glimpse into their little minds and find out how they see us and the world around them.

Pretend Play also gives your child a feeling of empowerment when she all of a sudden becomes the one in control – the grown up who gets to tell others what to do. Not only is this great practice, it also does wonders for your child's self esteem.

Your child will master several different social skills through pretend play. She gets to practice language and communicate with peers, eye-hand coordination as well as other motor skills. Your child is able to practice these skills and social behaviors and can learn from her mistakes without any sense of failure – after all, it's just pretend.

# How to Encourage Your Child to Pretend Play

In the past, children would automatically start pretend playing at around age 3. The reason is simple...there wasn't much else to do. A child could ask a parent to read a book to him every once in a while, but for the most part he had to keep himself entertained. Pretend play came naturally.

Today things are different. Our children are surrounded by distractions in the form of TV Shows, video games, planned play and learning sessions in preschools and play dates. Wanting to give our children the best education possible, we bury them in flash cards, educational videos, and reading books to them.

While all of these activities most definitely have their place in your child's education, it is also important to give our kids time to play pretend and to encourage them to do so.

The best way to get children to pretend play is to give them the means to do so. Here are some simple things you can do and things you can provide them with that will encourage them to pretend to be someone else.

## **Role Playing**

Role-playing is a great way to introduce your child to pretend play. You can start with something as simple as reversing roles (you are the child and your child is the parent) and then move into more complicated scenarios where you pretend to be a shopkeeper and your child comes to buy something.

Pick any everyday situation you come across from a doctor's visit to getting a haircut and turn it into a role-play a few days later. Before you know it your child will suggest what roles you should take on today.

## **Dolls and Action Figures**

Dolls and action figures are a great way for children to pretend play by themselves. Each figure can take on a different role, allowing your child to explore a situation from different angles.

Keep a box of small dolls or action figures around along with some blocks, scraps of fabric etc, so your child can make beds, chairs and other props.

If your child doesn't play with them on his or her own in the beginning, sit down on the floor and just start playing yourself. He or she will soon join in and before you know it you will find your child sitting on the floor playing with the dolls and figures.

Once your child figures out how, pretend playing with figures is a great way to entertain himself just about anywhere.

## **Puppets**

Puppets are another great way to pretend play. It takes a little more interaction with you or a playmate than the action figures. All you need are some simple finger or hand puppets. You can make them out of felt or fabric scraps, or purchase a few puppets.

Sock puppets are a great way to get your child started with puppets. All you need is a sock and two buttons. Of course you can use fabric, felt and yarn scraps to customize each sock and give it some character.

## **Costumes**

Costumes are the ultimate way for your child to get completely immersed in a character. Start collecting a few outfits from Halloween -- turn overalls and a straw hat into a gardener's outfit and recycle one of your old white shirts into a doctor or vet's lab coat.

You can make all sorts of costumes for different characters from A (Astronaut) to Z (Zebra)

With the I Love Halloween Costumes ebook at

<http://www.ILoveHalloweenCostumes.com>

They are fast, easy and inexpensive to make and there is no sewing involved.

Here are a few pretend play ideas almost any child will love. Start with a few of these and before you know it, your child will come up with his or her own ideas.

### **Veterinarian**

All you'll need is any of the stuffed animals your kids already have plus some bandages. You can substitute an empty pen to serve as a thermometer or syringe. A pair of headphones can quickly be turned into a stethoscope by taping a plastic bottle cap to the jack.

### **Grocery Store**

You can quickly put a grocery store together on a low shelf or side table. All you'll need is a basket and several empty cereal and rice boxes. Add a few canned goods and some dry beans, and you're all set. You can also draw up your own money on pieces of paper and cut some coins out of cardboard. Ask your child to help you color them. Take turns with your child being the shopper or the storekeeper.

### **Library**

When your child gets bored of playing store, turn the grocery store into a library. Make up a library card for every family member and add a small piece of paper into each of your child's books. If your child cannot read or write yet, draw a symbol for each family member, or use a different color. When someone checks out a book from the family library, ask the child to record who took it and when it is due back in. You can also ask your child to sort the books either by topic or alphabetically.

### **Firefighter**

Have your kids turn an empty cardboard box into a fire truck. They can color it and draw tires on with markers or cut out shapes from construction paper. Paint an empty clean can (like a coffee can) blue to use as an emergency light. You can have them make a police car, ambulance or garbage truck. You'll soon see your children pretending to be a fire fighter, police officer, etc.

### **Let's Cook**

All you'll need are a few pots and pans, some wooden spoons, and if you'd like, some dry rice or beans. Your kids can also draw shapes of favorite foods on construction paper and color them with crayons or markers. After that, let the pretending begin. Encourage your child to pretend cook in the kitchen with you while you are fixing dinner. It will keep your child occupied, while you can still keep an eye on him.

# Resources

## Homemade Costumes

Make costumes for pretend play or for Halloween with your child. It's easy, inexpensive and no sewing involved. Find out how at [www.ILoveHalloweenCostumes.com](http://www.ILoveHalloweenCostumes.com)

## Kid's Crafts & Activities

### **KinderInfo**

Discover the fun arts and crafts you can make with your child at [www.kinderinfo.com](http://www.kinderinfo.com). Don't forget to sign up for the free newsletter.

### **Show Kids the Fun**

Fun crafts, games and activities for kids of all ages can be found at [www.showkidsthefun.com](http://www.showkidsthefun.com)