

Play is the key way children learn about themselves, others and the world they live in. It is essential to their learning, development, health, and physical, mental and social well-being – and it's FUN! Play provides the building blocks to be ready for school.



## Doll Play

Baby dolls provide lots of practise to develop fine motor, cognitive, social and self-help skills.

### Did you know?

Baby dolls are fantastic toys for both boys and girls to learn about themselves and their world. Using dolls brings the big world down to a manageable size for toddlers. They open up and expand pretend play opportunities. Simple realistic dolls are best for toddlers as they look most like the real thing.

### Add language

During doll play make comments and introduce occasional “where, what, who” questions to keep the conversation going. Pretend play feeding, bathing and bedtime with dolls gives opportunities to learn and practice names for body parts, clothing and eating utensils; and words for colours, size, position, actions, and feelings. Different types of words are the building blocks your toddler uses to make longer sentences.

### Other development

Dressing skills like managing buttons and zips are often easier for children to practice on their doll. Feeding dolls gives the toddler practice holding and using utensils such as spoons, forks, cups and bowls. Acting out toileting with a doll pretending to use the potty can sometimes be helpful with toddlers ready for toilet training. Encouraging your toddler to share books with their dolls gives them a chance to practice what they are learning about how books work and the sound



of story telling. These are important foundational skills for learning to read later.

Doll play helps to practice helping, sharing, nurturing and caring skills. Your toddler gets to re-enact their own experience or perhaps prepare for a new sibling or get to care for their baby doll while parents are caring for a new baby.

Doll play gives your toddler a chance to have some power and control through play in a safe environment. They may act out things with a doll that they wouldn't do to a real baby.

### Safety

Dolls which have batteries can be a hazard for toddlers both as a battery choking risk and if the batteries leak. Dolls that can have fluids go through them so they can “wet” can fill with mould inside.

- Playgroup WA has a treasure trove of play activities for babies, toddlers and 3-5 year olds, for home and playgroup. These play activities cover a balanced diet of play across sensory, movement, language and thinking skill areas.

You can find them at [www.playgroupwa.com.au/playideas](http://www.playgroupwa.com.au/playideas) or visit [www.facebook.com/playgroupwa](https://www.facebook.com/playgroupwa)