

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.



## Animals - Pretend & Play

Babies are attracted to the faces on toy animals and are ready for simple pretend play from a young age.

### Did you know?

Babies will try to copy you making animal sounds from around 8 months of age. Copying your sounds is an important step towards using words themselves.

### Add language

You could point out and name the same animals in pictures, with toy animals and with real animals e.g. a picture of a dog, a toy dog, a pet dog. Learning to recognise that words, pictures and toys represent real things is important for learning language for talking and later for reading and writing.

### Other development

Chunky toy animals give babies practice at grasping and moving objects with irregular shapes. This helps build their fine motor skills.

Handling toy animals made from different materials gives your baby valuable experiences of different sensations of touch. Toy animals can be soft and furry to feel. Some can be with soft, textured plastic or with hard, smooth plastic.



Your baby is learning about their world through their sensory experiences.

Soft toy animals often become comfort items for babies and young children. This can help them learn to self-soothe which is the beginning of them managing their own activity levels and emotions. This is important for their emotional development.

- 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)

