

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY IN YOUNG CHILDREN**

### **8 to 12 months**

- Sensorimotor or presymbolic play
- Exploration of moving parts
- Use of several play strategies (patting, banging, turning, throwing)
- Doesn't mouth everything
- Some simple tool use (pulling a string to get a toy)

### **13 to 17 months**

- Continuation of sensorimotor play
- Recognizes operating parts
- Uses trial and error to operate toys
- Uses familiar objects appropriately
- "Dump and pour"
- Hands a toy to an adult to get help or attention
- Uses an index finger to point

### **17 to 19 months**

- The beginnings of symbolic/pretend play
- Single pretend actions (e.g., pretending to drink from an empty cup)

### **19 to 22 months**

- Short combinations of actions (e.g., feed the doll and put her to bed)
- Elaborations of single actions (e.g., putting a lid on a pot before putting it on the stove)

### **2 ½ years**

- "True" sequence of steps (e.g., talk to the doll, fix her bottle, feed her, burp her)
- Still acting upon the prop
- Needs realistic, life-sized props

### **3 years**

- Longer sequences
- Transforms self into a role (e.g., "I'm the Mommy")
- Engages in associative play with peers

### **3 to 3 ½ years**

- Begins to use miniatures (e.g., Fisher Price figures)
- Dolls and puppets are used in reciprocal role-taking (e.g., the child talks for the baby and for the parent dolls)

- Assigns roles to others
- Uses one object to represent another (decontextualization)
- Uses blocks and sandbox for imaginative play

### **3 ½ to 4 years**

- Planned scripts
- Uses language to invent props and set the scene
- Child or doll can have multiple roles
- Begins to build three-dimensional structures

### **5 years**

- Plans several sequences and organizes what is needed
- Collaborative play
- Goal-directed themes
- Uses language to set the scene, actions, and roles
- Activities go beyond the themes that the child has seen

### **And beyond**

- In typical children, play continues to develop throughout childhood. Many of the linguistic aspects of play are not fully formed until ages 10 to 12.