

Skill:

Play with stuffed animals or dolls in a variety of ways.

Materials Needed:

Stuffed animal, puppet, or doll
variety of household objects

Targets

- ☐ Pretend to feed
- ☐ Pretend to soothe
- ☐ Take a nap
- ☐ Change diaper
- ☐ Take a bath

WHY TEACH THIS SKILL?

Sometimes our kids don't automatically know how to play with toys and they may use them in inappropriate or very limited ways, or quickly lose interest in using them.

Teaching these skills will give your child more options for playing with toys, as well as working on **social skills, conversation, imaginary play skills**, imitation skills and following directions.

HOW TO TEACH:

1. Place a stuffed animal in front of you and in front of the child.
2. Say, "Do this!" and pretend to play with the animal.
3. The child should immediately imitate your action with his/her own stuffed animal.
4. If your child doesn't respond right away, use hand-over-hand prompting to assist.
5. Each time the child completes the action, provide immediate praise and reinforcement (hugs, high 5s, a few seconds of a preferred video, a small edible reinforcer, a token, etc).
6. Continue to repeat the activity 5 to 10 times before taking a break.
7. Repeat frequently (a few times throughout the day, several days in a row) until your child is very consistently imitating your action with the stuffed animal independently each time you say, "Do this" and model the action.
8. When action is mastered, then go on to teaching the next one.
9. If you think of more ways to play with stuffed animals, add those as well.
10. Have fun while teaching! It is "play" after all!

STUFFED ANIMAL PLAY

- **Pretend to feed:** Place the stuffed animal in a chair, pretend to feed from a spoon/bowl, give sips from a cup, etc.
- **Pretend to Soothe:** Rock stuffed animal in rocking chair, hold and pat its back, etc. .
- **Take a nap:** Create a bed for the stuffed animal (a pillow works great) and cover with a blanket
- **Change diaper:** Pretend to change the diaper of the stuffed animal (a small cloth works fine)
- **Take a bath:** Place the stuffed animal in a plastic bin or tub (no water required) and pretend to wash

Model Language appropriate for the activity, even if your child does not repeat it.
Praise any language approximations that your child makes.