

Children learn about textures, and the items provided encourage children to use language to talk about and describe what they have found. Items such as buttons, shells and also collections such as 'old and new' objects can be put out for children to explore. In some settings items are hidden in sand for children to discover.

Simple board games

In this phase children learn to play simple board games with adults joining in. Children learn to take turns and share, and also improve their mathematical skills, such as counting and problem solving. Many games also involve fine motor skills as children handle dice and cards, and move counters. Popular games include picture lotto, snags and the magnetic fish game. These games also tend to encourage children to talk



What skills are these children learning while playing this card game?

Sensory play

Materials such as sand, water and dough are used as play materials for this age range. They help children to concentrate and practise fine motor movements, such as scooping, rolling and pouring. These movements are also important for writing later on. Sensory play helps children of this age group to share and communicate with each other. It also encourages children to talk.

Imaginative play

This is an amazing period for imaginative play because children are now talking quite well and enjoy playing with each other. Imaginative play opportunities develop further children's communication and social skills, but also help them to express feelings. As most imaginative play requires using **small-world play** (such as farm animals) or props running around, children develop their fine motor skills. For imaginative play that requires

Key term

Small-world play – play with miniature characters, animals or other objects.

Table 2.2 gives examples of toys and resources that are used for small-world play and pretend play.

Table 2.2 Pretend play and small-world play.

Pretend play	Small-world play
<p>This type of play may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dressing-up clothes • home corners • shops. 	<p>This type of play may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • trains • cars • farm animals • dinosaurs • play people • dolls' houses.

Construction play

In this age range, children can spend longer periods playing without the involvement of an adult, either on their own or in a group. They enjoy using wooden blocks, plastic building bricks and blocks. Construction play includes doing jigsaw puzzles as well as putting together train tracks, for example. Through construction play, children at this age develop imagination and creativity, but also learn about textures, shapes and problem solving.

When children work together, they gain social and communication skills. This type of play can also support children's language skills. Children often talk to themselves when they are 2 and 3 years old. Later, when they can play cooperatively, language is needed to negotiate with other children.



What skills are these children learning from this type of play?