

SIX STAGES OF PLAY

STAGE 1 THE STAGES OF PLAY

UNOCCUPIED PLAY (BIRTH - 3MO)

Sensory activities that lack focus or narrative

Key Characteristics:

- Lacks social interaction and/or sustained focus
- No clear story lines
- Non Existent or very limited language



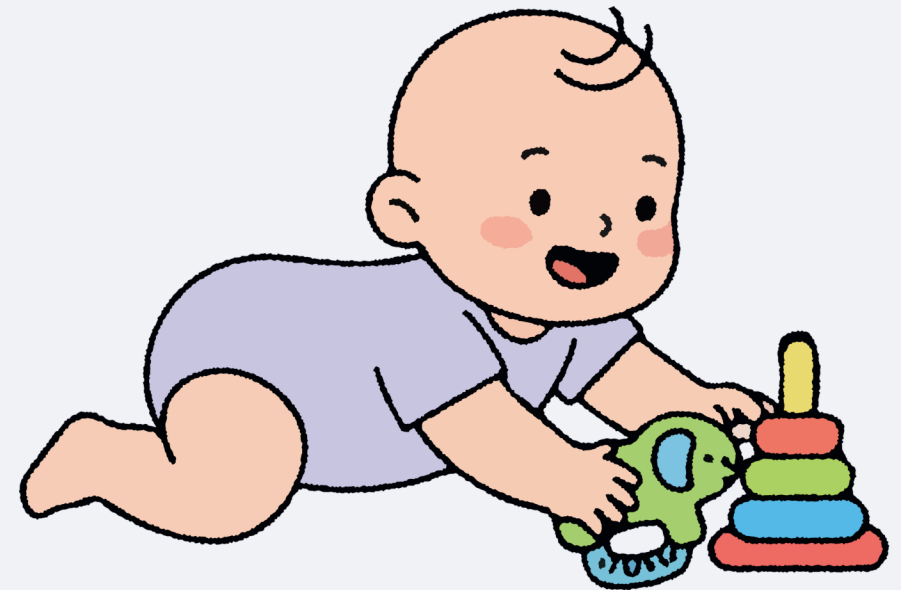
STAGE 2 THE STAGES OF PLAY

SOLITARY PLAY (3MO - 2 ½ YEARS)

Play that involves a child playing alone with little interest in toys outside their immediate vicinity

Key Characteristics:

- Increased focus on toys; play is unstructured
- Play narratives like symbolic play
- No interest in adults or other children during play



STAGE 3 THE STAGES OF PLAY

ONLOOKER PLAY (2 ½ - 3 ½ YEARS)

Showing interest in play behaviors of other children

Key Characteristics:

- Showing interest in other children's play
- Withdrawing from play due to fear or hesitation
- Sitting near other children to see how others play



STAGE 4 THE STAGES OF PLAY

PARALLEL PLAY (3 ½ - 4 YEARS)

Children playing in proximity to one another but not together

Key Characteristics:

- Same room, same resources, but not together
- Independent exploration, goals, & focuses during play
- Observing & mimicking, but minimal communication



STAGE 5 THE STAGES OF PLAY

ASSOCIATIVE PLAY (4 - 4 ½ YEARS)

Working side by side but not necessarily together

Key Characteristics:

- Negotiating sharing of resources
- Emerging language and chatter; closer proximity
- Still playing independently; different objectives



STAGE 6 THE STAGES OF PLAY

COOPERATIVE PLAY (4 ½ YEARS & UP)

Fully integrated social group play

Key Characteristics:

- Working together on a game with shared objectives
- Roles or personas during game play
- May see compromise or sacrifice for common good

