



## Playtime Connections: Play Ball!

### CONNECTING & LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

<b>Play Ball</b>	<p>A ball is a classic toy and one that many children have in their home. Playing ball is fun for both children and adults and can be done in a variety of environments (home, park, school, etc). You can target several developmental skills with a ball during your everyday routines. Routines are things you do every day with your child. These routines include getting the mail, washing dishes, doing laundry, running errands, playing, etc. – things that are consistent and repetitive. Play Routines include playing with objects, moving your body, exploring objects with your senses, learning social interactions, communicating with others and singing songs!</p>
<b>PLAY</b>	<p>Sensory balls and <i>O-Balls</i> are great to work on grasping and holding objects. These balls are easy for babies to hold with one or both hands. Once your child has mastered holding and grasping a ball, encourage them to drop the balls into a container. Laundry baskets, empty boxes, and plastic storage containers are easy to find around the house. The smaller the ball and container, the more challenging it can be. As your child gets older, you can transition to smaller size balls and put them into smaller plastic containers, empty <i>Pringles</i> cans, cups, paper towel tubes, etc. <b><i>Please supervise your child while playing with smaller size balls. If they're still mouthing toys, playing with smaller balls and toys should be closely supervised and monitored.</i></b></p>
<b>MOVE</b>	<p>Rolling, catching, and throwing a ball are great ways to develop gross motor skills. Rolling the ball to the left and right of your child encourages them to pivot and lean in that direction. Throwing the ball works on shoulder and trunk strength, upper body awareness, and awareness of their body position in space. Catching a ball works on eye-hand coordination, balance, and body coordination. If your child is having difficulty with catching and throwing, try using a partially inflated ball, or an <i>O-Ball</i>. These items will move slower and offer your child more success. While these skills may be targeted playing outside, there are other ways to adapt the physical play inside the house. Roll socks into ball shapes and have your child “throw” and “catch” them while doing laundry or putting them in the hamper.</p>
<b>EXPLORE</b>	<p>Exploring different textures is important for the development of our tactile sense. Let your child explore the texture of different balls, such as soft tennis balls, prickly <i>Koosh</i> balls, rubbery bouncy balls, sticky fidget balls, bumpy textured balls, soft cloth balls, etc. Encourage your child to pat, squish, push, and throw these balls into various household containers. Another activity is to place your child on top of a large ball and bounce them gently up and down while you support them safely. You can also have them lay on top of the ball and roll back and forth. Encourage them to put their hands down to touch the floor as they go forward and then push themselves back. You can also make a homemade ball pit by placing balls in a laundry basket, storage container, small box, or inflatable baby pool. Many children like ball pits because they can be a calming sensory experience. If the balls end up outside of the containers – that’s a great opportunity to work on cleaning up, following directions and the concepts “in” and “out!”</p>

## LEARN

Ball play is a great way to work on social play and language skills. When your child has the ball, pat your chest and say, “my turn.” Encourage them to roll or toss it back to you. Praise them when they do! Encourage them to reach, gesture, sign or vocalize to indicate that they want to play. When they do, praise them and give them the ball immediately to reinforce their communication attempts. Playing ball is a great way to work on building vocabulary, imitating sounds, turn-taking, and interacting with others.

## TALK

Encourage your child to imitate gestures, signs and/or word approximations (for example, “bah” for “ball”). If your child is consistently producing single words, expand on that and model 2-word phrases, (e.g., “go ball, more ball”). If your child is producing 2 words consistently, model 3-word phrases, “more ball please, go red ball, etc.” Target these words during routines: “ball, go, stop, more, big, little, push, my turn, in, out, etc.”

## SING

Children love music and it’s a great way to reinforce language and movement.

### Move that Ball!

Roll that (*color or size description of ball*) ball down to town.  
Down to town. Down to town.  
Roll that (*color or size description of ball*) ball down to town.  
Roll that (*color or size description of ball*) ball down!

*Example:* Roll that red ball down to town.  
Down to town. Down to town.  
Roll that red ball down to town.  
Roll that red ball down!

**Then, change the action verb based on the actions your child is doing. . . *pat, push, kick, throw, clap, etc.***

*Bounce that red ball down to town. . .*  
*Pat that red ball down to town. . .*

### ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

*Brainstorm other daily routines where you can target some of these skills.*

### PROBLEM SOLVING, REFLECTION & FEEDBACK:

*Think about how things went when you tried these activities with your child. What went well? What will you do differently or try next time?*

