



## Structured Play

Structured play is an approach used to teach children how to play appropriately with toys, expand their use/variety and increase their developmental level of play. Structured play emphasises organising and clarifying their play activities. By structuring play, more abstract concepts can become visually clear and make sense to the child, in turn, increasing their motivation and willingness to participate.



Many children with autism do not know how to play with a toy. This is part of the reason why children sometimes focus on a single aspect of a toy. In order to help your child enjoy his/her toys in a more creative way, you need to make the play activities and toys make sense to them.

### Why is play important?

- Play is a child's 'work'. It's what they do in order to learn about their world.
- Play allows a child to learn and practice new skills in all areas.
- Play provides a vehicle to interact with people and objects in their environment.
- Play promotes independence during 'down time'.
- Play builds confidence and competency.

### How to further enhance your child's ability to play functionally with toys:

- Pick out toys that are related to your children's INTERESTS.
- If your child engages in 'non-functional behaviour' choose toys that provide the same sensory input but in a more appropriate way. You could also start with cause and effect play.
- Choose toys that correspond to your child's developmental level.
- Don't be afraid to 'change the rules' or use only some of the pieces to simplify the play in the beginning.
- Remember to teach 'one step at a time'. Small steps will lead to BIG gains!
- Program for success! Provide 'prompts' as needed in order to ensure that your child continues to be successful and motivated.
- Structure play time in 'small time frames' frequently throughout the day.
- Encourage use of imagination whilst playing.