

How to Use a Kitchen Play-set to Encourage Language Skills

Kitchen play-sets are a great toy for encouraging language skills. Kitchen play-sets may include a variety of different pieces such as food, pots, cups, plates, bowls, silverware, an oven, or a fridge.

Ideas for beginning social skills:

- Pretend play skills- Kitchen play-sets are great for pretend play skills! You can start by pretending to eat the food or put food in the oven. You can also pretend to cut the food or stir food with a spoon. After your child can perform these basic pretend play actions, you can pretend to make a cake and have a birthday party. Or, pretend to be at a restaurant and have your child pretend to take your order.
- Pointing to make a choice- Hold up two different foods, for example ice cream and an apple. Then ask your child to choose which one he/she wants. You may have to model pointing for your child or take your child's hand and help him/her point.
- Understanding "my" and "your"- You can give your child directions to practice understanding the pronouns "my" and "your" while you pretend to have a picnic. Set out 2 plates, bowls, spoons, forks, and cups. Then give your child directions such as "put an apple on my plate." or "pour milk in your cup."
- Turn taking- You can practice taking turns during play. For example, you could put different foods in a bowl and start stirring them with a spoon. Then prompt your child to say "my turn" and give him/her a turn stirring. You could also take turns cutting food, rolling out dough, or checking on food that's in the oven.

Ideas for receptive language skills:

- Receptive Vocabulary- Ask your child to identify the different foods by having him/her point to the foods when you name them. For example, you could say "show me the grapes" or "where is the apple?" If your child is having difficulty finding the correct foods, then just set out 2-3 different food items for him/her to choose from.

- Identify foods by attributes- Ask your child to identify different foods when you describe them. You could say "show me a red food" or "show me a food that should go in the fridge."
- Practice following 1-step directions- You can give your child directions about what to do with different food items. You could say "put the carrot in the bowl" or "put the cookie in the oven."
- Practice following multi-step directions- After your child has mastered following 1-step directions, you can make the directions more difficult by adding steps. You could say "put the eggs in the bowl and then stir them up" or "wash the strawberry and then put it in the fridge."

Ideas for expressive language skills:

- Have your child ask for different foods, dishes, or silverware
 - If your child is using sign language, have him/her imitate the sign for the desired piece of food. You could also have your child point to a picture symbol of the desired food item to request it.
 - If your child is beginning to use words, have him/her imitate the name of the food item that he/she wants.
 - If your child is beginning to use sentences, prompt him/her to say "I want _____" or "put _____ on my plate."
- Expressive vocabulary- Work on food vocabulary by naming the different food pieces and utensils (plate, bowl, spoon, fork, knife, napkin, etc.).
- Practice using different verbs- Encourage your child to use different action words during play. You can model the action words for your child by describing what you are doing. You could use words like "eat, drink, cook, stir, cut, wash, roll, mix, open, close, put in, take out"
- Practice making a narrative- Have your child describe the steps for making something. For example, you could have your child tell you how to make cookies, pizza, or a sandwich. Encourage your child to use words like "first," "then," and "next." Help your child include all the steps. If you are making cookies, you would want to include steps like adding ingredients to a bowl, mixing the dough, rolling out the dough, using cookie cutters to make shapes, baking the cookies, and putting icing on top.