

## Recognised Types of Play

There are many different ways of playing and the things that children do when they play are likely to be wide ranging and varied. Different types of play have been categorised in a variety of ways. Listed below are sixteen play types, explanations and examples are adapted from **Bob Hughes, 'A Taxonomy of Play Types' (2002)** and **'Best Play: What Play Provision should do for children' (2000)**. In this taxonomy, the Play Types are listed separately and alphabetically, but many of them overlap.

Children can move from one Play Type to another rapidly and their play may cover more than one at a time.

**Communication Play:** Using words, gestures, or sounds to share messages—jokes, rhymes, slang, debates, songs, or secret codes.

**Creative Play:** Expressing imagination through making, mixing, or reshaping materials—freely creating without needing a set outcome.

**Deep Play:** Taking perceived risks to test courage and survival skills—climbing high, moving fast, or trying dangerous challenges.

**Dramatic Play:** Acting out real or fictional events not personally experienced—TV shows, public events, or famous figures.

**Exploratory Play:** Investigating and experimenting with objects or environments to see what they can do or how they behave.

**Fantasy Play:** Pretending in unreal, imaginative worlds—superheroes, pirates, dragons, or magical adventures.

**Imaginative Play:** Acting out realistic scenarios in unreal contexts—riding invisible horses or “eating” pretend food.

**Locomotor Play:** Enjoying movement for its own sake—running, climbing, swinging, chasing, or balancing.

**Mastery Play:** Gaining control over the environment through building, demolishing, digging, or repeating actions.

**Object Play:** Discovering new ways to use or manipulate everyday objects—boxes as shoes, paper as a ball.

**Recapitulative Play:** Re-enacting ancestral human behaviours—shelter building, fire making, exploring nature, or ritual play.

**Role Play:** Trying out identities or roles—teacher, driver, or pretending to be old, asleep, or blind.

**Rough and Tumble Play:** Physical contact play involving wrestling, chasing, or mock fighting for fun and bonding.

**Social Play:** Playing with others while learning and negotiating group rules and cooperation.

**Socio-Dramatic Play:** Re-creating real-life emotional or social experiences—family life, school, arguments, or care.

**Symbolic Play:** Using one thing to represent another—sticks as swords, marks as codes, or sounds as language.