

Introducing a Toy: Turning Toys into Educational Tools

STEP 1: Explore the toy with the person for at least 15 minutes

Let the other person lead this process

Do NOT show them how the toy works

Encourage Free Play: Ask the person to show you how it works and/or start fidgeting with it to peak his or her interest.

If the other person is struggling with a toy ask questions do NOT show them how to overcome the struggle (unless it is appropriate because of ability level).

TIPS: Ask questions and try to figure it out together. Give hints but not the solution. When people get frustrated and want to give up: Encourage them to keep trying. Tell them it is okay to feel frustrated, validate what they are feeling. Breathe Deep, Think of Options, Pick an Option and Move Forward

Step 2: Let the person continue to explore the toy on his or her own

Observe how he or she uses the toy: Identify strength's & weakness and take mental notes or keep a play journal:

Is the person verbalizing or displaying nonverbal communication while playing? Is the person using fine and/or gross motor skills? What does the person seem to enjoy about the toy?

Step 3: Now think of this toy as an educational tool

Will this toy help...

Develop fine motor skills?	Promote independent play?	Promote expressive play?
Develop gross motor skills?	Promote sustained engagement?	Promote task completion?
Enhance a sensory experience?	Promote cooperative play?	Promote pretend play?

How will you choose to use this toy?

FREE PLAY

Free Play allows kids to explore, take risks, be creative & interact with others, etc. Free Play does not mean anything goes; boundaries and rules are still applicable.

DIRECTED PLAY

Directed Play is when a person gives instructions on how to accomplish a task. Directed Play is useful when the person or project needs specific task segmentation, leading science projects, etc.

GUIDED PLAY

Guided Play is a combination of Free Play and Directed Play where guidance is provided during play. Guided play aides in reaching educational goals by allowing for scaffolding educational techniques to be used in a fun and productive manner.