



Play Skills

Play skills are important part of childhood development. Play helps children to learn and practice new skills, try out new roles and interact with other children. In this way, play assists children to develop both cognitively and socially.

Play skills are hard to define and there is no single definition for it. However, common characteristics are used to describe play skills, including:

- Play is pleasurable and enjoyable
- Play is not goal focused and imposed from the outside
- Play is spontaneous and voluntary
- Play involves active engagement on the part of the player

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often present with delays in social play and sometimes find it hard to engage in pretend play. The lack of plays skills means that children with ASD are less likely to have peers who would like to play with him/her. This makes it harder for children with ASD to develop their social and emotional skills.

The iMsocial™ program focuses on teaching children play skills, ensuring everyone involved enjoys the activity. Some of the skills will require structured teaching and others will be taught through real play situations. Where possible, peers with increased play skills provide positive role models for others participants. However in the home environment, siblings can also support children with ASD as positive role models for play skills.

References

Jordan, R (2003), 'Social play and autistic spectrum disorders: a perspective on theory, implications and educational approaches', *Autism*, 7, p. 347.

Carpenter, M.H., Charlop, M.H., Dennis, B., & Greenberg, A.L. (2010), *Education & Treatment of Children*, 33:3, p. 371.