

The Baby & Toddler Home Play Guide

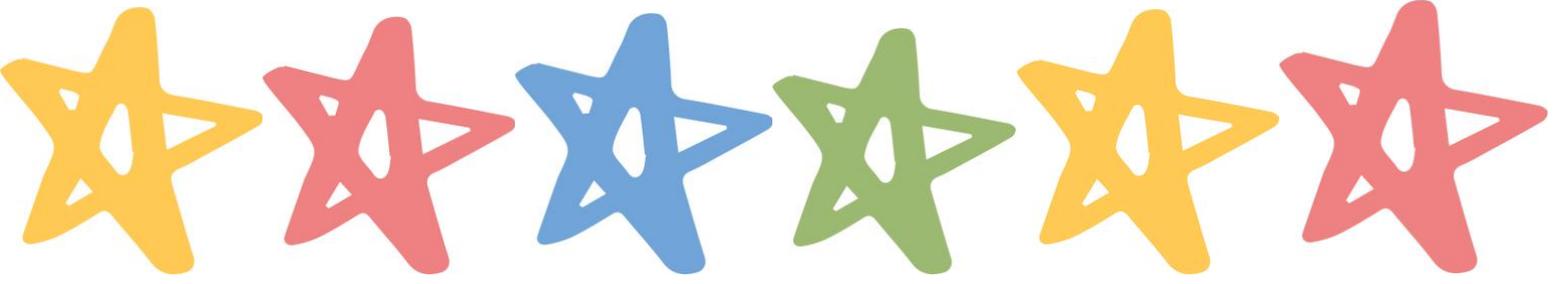
This guide is intended as just that; you know your child better than anyone and continuing with whatever you would usually do at home is the best way to help them feel secure amongst the chaos! However, with more hours in the house to fill, I have put together a few simple play ideas using things you have around the house. Some activities will be better suited to different ages, just pick and choose what you fancy.

Hope it helps!

I have divided the activities below into the areas of development of the Early Years Foundation Stage (which is the guidance used in all childcare settings and schools for children aged 0-5).

For children under the age of three play focuses on three 'Prime Areas'; Physical Development, Communication & Language and Personal, Social & Emotional Development.

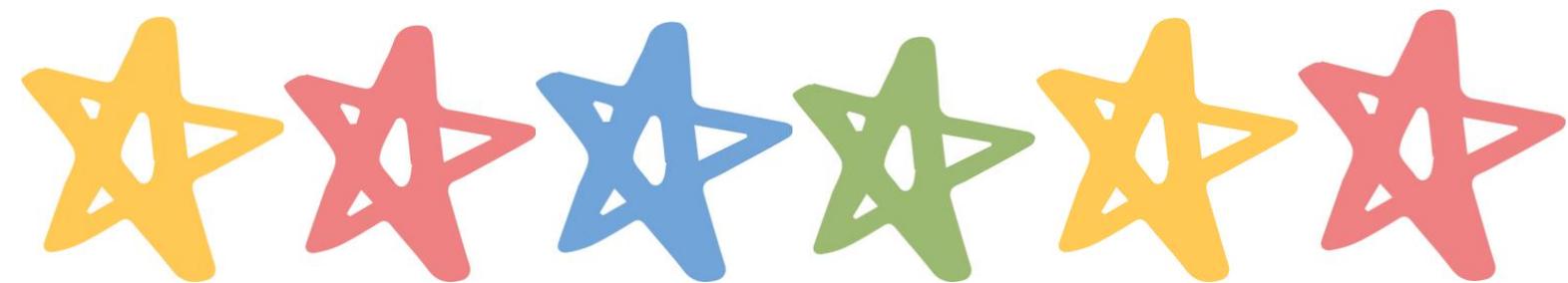
Don't be put off by what seems a rather formal approach, it just means that if you pick three activities, one from each area each day, you will be giving your little one a balance of developmental opportunities. It's also worth thinking about what your little one is particularly into at the moment; they will engage and learn so much more if they are following their interests.



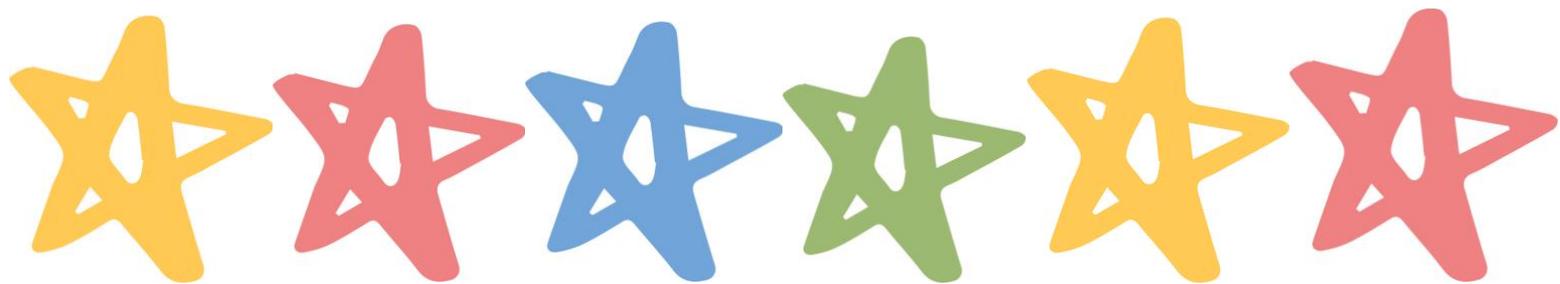
Home Play Guide

Personal, Social & Emotional Development

- Rolling a ball; sit opposite your child on the floor and roll a ball to them and encourage them to roll it back to you. This is great for building the idea of relationships being an equal two-way experience. Add to this with language, saying your name and your child's name when receiving the ball. Make sure you encourage lots of eye contact and smiles.
- Make family post boxes – print off large photos of family members and stick onto empty cereal (or similar) boxes. Stick a photo on the front to each box and cut out a letterbox style slot where the mouth is! Use play food (or real!!) to 'feed' your little one's special people. Encourage them to choose something they think each person might like. This activity will help to introduce the idea of thinking of the needs and likes of others; a first step in developing empathy which is so important in building relationships, especially when playing alongside other children.
- Looking after pets will also help your little one to learn about the needs of others. Could they feed the dog its biscuits? Brush the cat? Help sweep out the rabbit's hutch?



- Make funny faces in the mirror together. See if you can show your child a few faces depicting emotions such as 'happy', 'sad', 'tired', 'cross' and use the word alongside it. Not only is this funny, it also helps your little one to begin to understand how to read emotions in others and to start to build a vocabulary which will help them to express how they are feeling.
- Have a 'two-man-band'; have an instrument each and copy what your child does with their instrument. You could also do the same idea with dancing, copying your child's moves! This will help your little one be aware of themselves as an individual and feel a great sense of being valued by you/
- Have a cuddle-a-thon! Get out all the cuddly toys you can find and give them all lots and lots of kisses and cuddles, tell them that you love them. That's it! Just share lots of loving!
- Sock matching – get out a collection of socks belonging to family members, including your little one. Encourage your child to match the pairs which will help them understand the idea that things go together – this is an early introduction to the idea of 'rules'. If they are enjoying this activity you could also try sorting into piles according to whose socks belong to who and then go and put them away in the right place! (You can also do something similar by getting your child to help sort the clean washing pile).

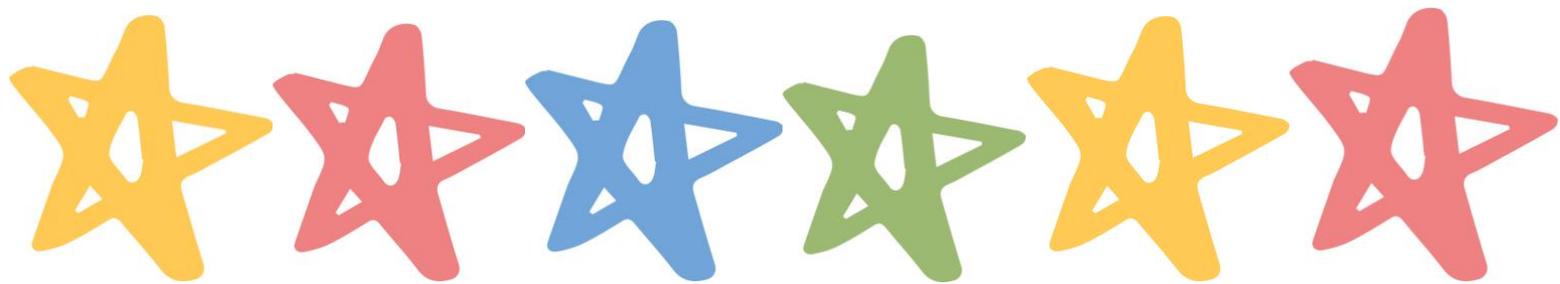


- Make a few 'treasure' bags or boxes – this is basically a container with a collection of interesting and unusual objects to inspire your little one's curiosity (pay attention to choke hazards and other dangers). A few ideas ball of wool, bunch of keys, kitchen measuring spoons, sieves, roll of sticky tape, all sorts of brushes, large cotton reels, metal spoons, ribbons, crinkly packaging paper

..... ! This sort of open-ended activity supports your little one's developing self-confidence and self-esteem as there is no 'end product', they can simply explore. If you have a few of these collections they can be a really useful tool for those times when your child is struggling with their emotions.

Physical Development

- Fill a few different containers with water and food colourings, essences, herbs etc if you have them, and freeze overnight – any little pots, bowls etc are fine (not too small to be a choking hazard). If you have any balloons or rubber gloves, these work well too. The next day tip out your ice shapes into a washing up bowl or similar, allow to melt slightly and then just let your little one explore! This is a lovely calm, multi-sensory experience to get your child's hands and fingers working hard to grasp, stroke and eventually Splash.
- Mud pies & potions outside – gather a collection of pots, pans, jugs, sieves, spoons, bowls etc outside. Collect bits of grass, leaves, petals, stones, mud Anything that's around that your little one finds interesting. Provide some water in a jug and just

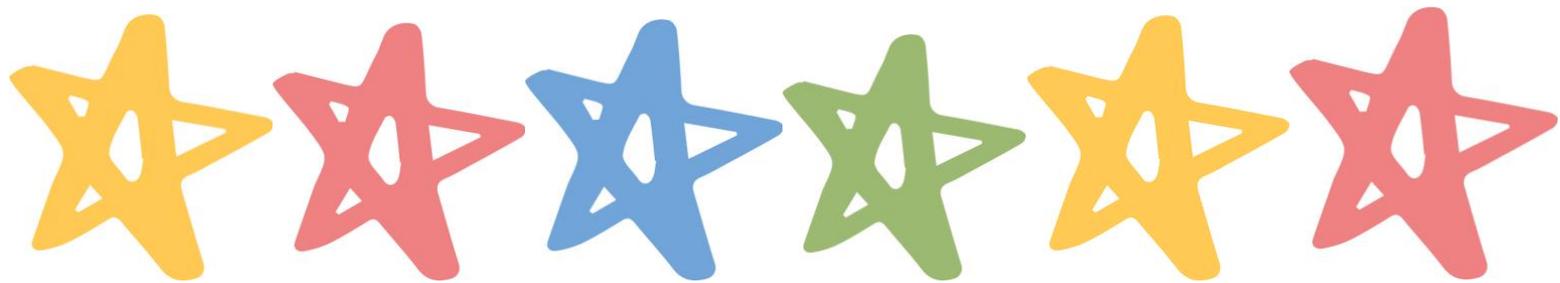


let them start combining all their treasures in different ways. This is great for challenging physical development as your child pours, stirs and, inevitably, tries to lift and carry heavy containers.

- Draw chalk 'roads' on the ground outside, add curves and bends if you're feeling creative. Then join your little one crawling, walking, jumping, rolling or running along, trying to stick to the road as

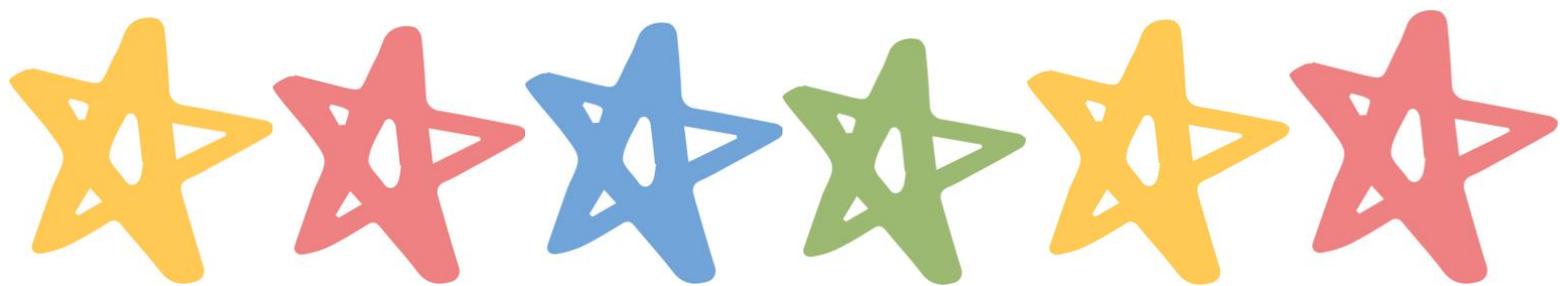
much as they can. This will support your little one's spatial awareness, balance and overall large muscle development.

- Store cupboard construction – use tins, packets and boxes from your store cupboard instead of blocks to build with. Tins of beans make amazingly tall towers, boxes of cereal, when balanced, make a great ramp for cars or balls to roll down, tuna tins roll really well under tunnels made from boxes of crackers.... This is going to help your little one explore how they have to find different ways to manage and manipulate different sizes and weights.
- Dig out your old handbags, purses, make up bags and wallets and provide a little selection of objects for your child to put in and out of them. This is not only great for practising and mastering fine-motor control but also really encourages concentration and perseverance.



- Dig out the Christmas decorations box – for younger babies try suspending some baubles above their baby gym or draping tinsel over it to swipe at. Older babies and children will enjoy a sensory tub filled with as much (safe) sparkly stuff as you can muster. Try closing the curtains with just a lamp on to add to the effect, or get the fairy lights out if you can face it! Exploring all these textures is doing a great job in refining the sense of touch in your child's hands – the more aware they become of the amazing things their hands can do, the better equipped they are for using a whole range of tools as they grow!

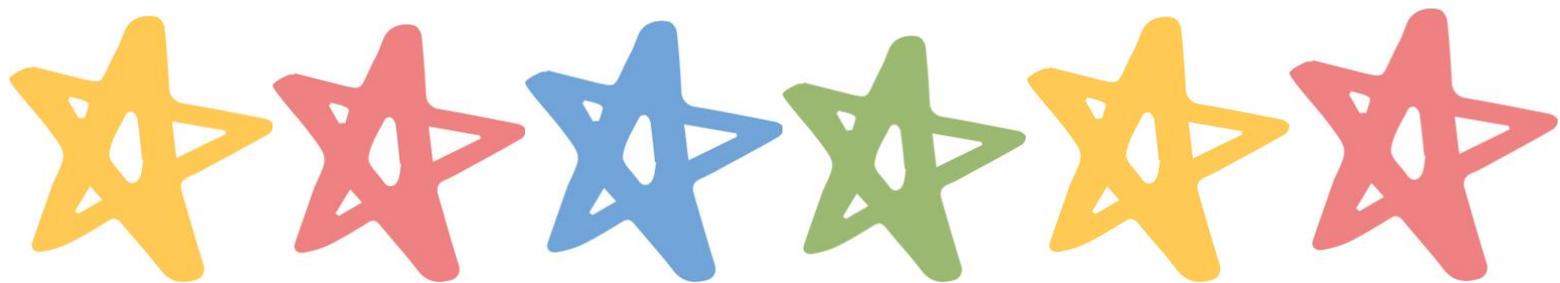
- Dig out some clean paintbrushes, add a bucket or two of water and let your little one go crazy painting whatever they want outside! Fences, walls, patio flags, gates, playhouses, decking etc, is all so much fun to paint and is absolutely amazing for whole body movement and control.
- Make an obstacle course with cushions and pillows – pile them as high as you dare for a great challenge for new crawlers or more experienced toddling mountaineers! Your little one will be using every single muscle in their tiny body, practising balance and safely exploring risk.
- Save your empty cosmetics jars and other pots with lids – once you have a collection of three or four, give them a good wash and present them, with lids off, to your little one to match the right lid to pot and to try to screw the lids on correctly. This is quite a tricky activity but really good for your child to explore



- contrasting sizes, how parts fit together and how to use their hands in particular ways for particular tasks.
- Throwing balls into a target, such as a bowl or bin. Any activity like this is perfect hand-eye coordination practise!
- Make edible paint – this is a simple recipe for paint that won't be harmful if a bit is eaten. Put 4 tablespoons of cornflour into a pan and add a little water to make a thick paste. Then add 1 cup of boiling water, stir thoroughly and bring to the boil, stirring constantly until thickened. Divide into little bowls and add food colouring to each. This will keep, covered, in the fridge for a week or two. The best way to play with this is with fingers – it's so lovely

to squelch and smooth. You can take prints of any swirly patterns made onto paper to decorate the walls too!

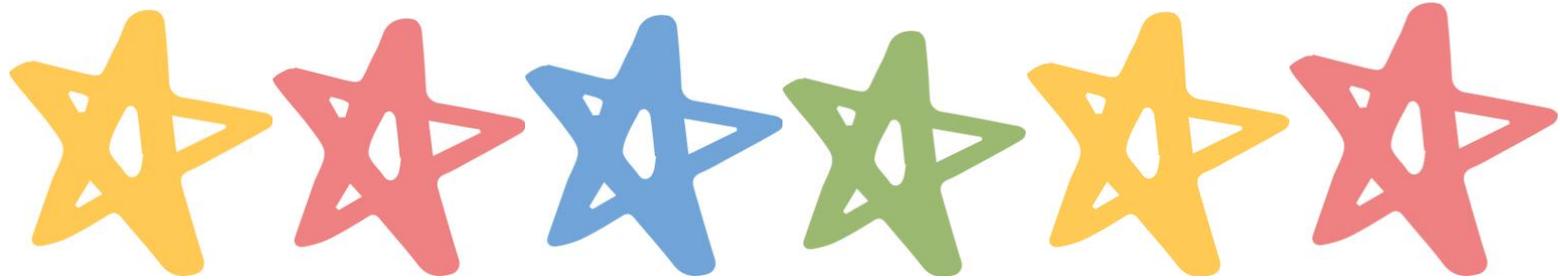
- A sensory obstacle course! This is messy... you have been warned! Cover your floor in a wipeable sheet or large pieces of paper and set out a series of sensory experiences for your little one to move through. Some ideas are the edible paint above, some slimy cooked spaghetti, a squirt of fluffy shaving foam, a pile of crunchy rice crispies, a length of shiny kitchen foil, a sprinkling of herbs whatever you can find that is interesting and safe. At the end of the run of sensory ingredients, place a bowl of soapy water, flannel and towel. Once it's set up, strip your little one down to just a nappy, place them at one end and leave them to it! Messy fun which uses their whole body and all of their senses!



- Hand-washing water play – provide your little one with a lovely bubbly bowl of water, soap and a towel. Put a few spots of something which might appear 'dirty' on different parts of their hands (ideas: marmite, chocolate spread, ketchup, jam...). Then help your child to wash off the 'dirt', encouraging them to check each finger, front and back of hands, nails etc. Introducing vocabulary such as 'dirty', 'clean', 'rub' and 'soap' and 'bubbles' as well as focusing their attention on each separate part of their hands will help them to see handwashing as an activity rather than a chore.

Communication and Language

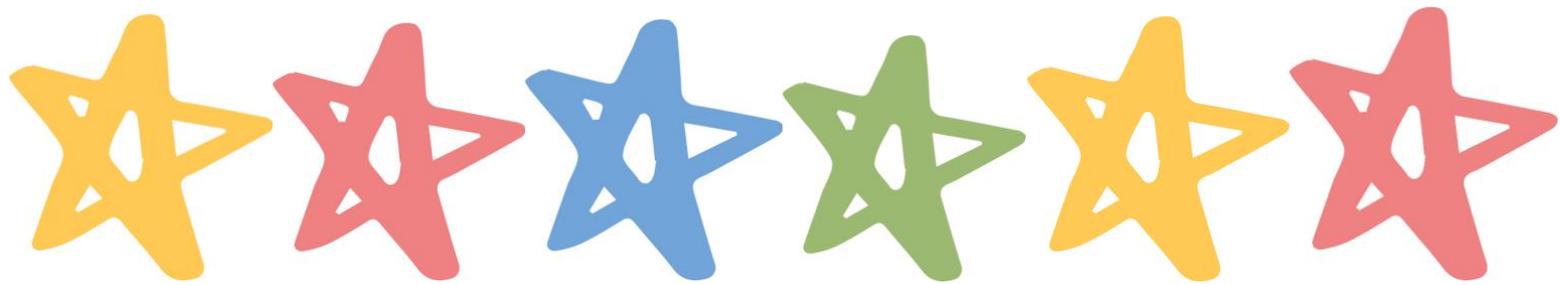
- Colour sorting – gather a set of containers in different colours and a collection of items such as bricks, cars, flowers, socks etc. Show your little one the containers and name the colour of each. It is best to just start with two colours and build up over time. Bring out your little collection of coloured items and demonstrate sorting, using clear language, eg “the red strawberry in the red pot”. Once you have done two or three, ask your little one to find the next one and so on. This activity is not only introducing colour vocabulary but also the concept of being able to sort and categorise things by different criteria.
- Have a baby disco! Choose your favourite playlist, draw the curtains, add any toys you might have with flashing lights (or have you got any flashing ones from Christmas?). Then dance away together, encouraging all sorts of movements to use



- different body parts such as clapping, foot stamping, arm swaying, head nodding go on, nobody can see you! Moving to music is such a great way to build core strength and singing along develops practising a range of speech sounds and this also has the added benefit of adding rhythmic awareness which will be used in years to come in learning phonics!
- Make a lucky dip box – fill an old cardboard box with shredded paper/tissue etc and hide a few of your little one’s familiar objects such as a cup, teddy, small book etc. Invite them to see what they can find and, as they pull each item out, name it for them. You can then play again, asking them to “put the cup in the box” until all items are returned ready to repeat. This is a simple way to encourage understanding and use of common objects.
- Grab a big blanket, throw or duvet and spread it out on the floor – it can then be a great hiding place, either for objects, your child or

you! No baby or toddler will ever tire of 'peek-a-boo' games and the ensuing belly laughs will make it all worthwhile. Development wise, your child will be learning the idea of 'object permanence' meaning that things still exist when out of sight. You can support learning of this concept by using lots of language during these games ... "where's teddy?" "Oh there he is! Hello teddy!".

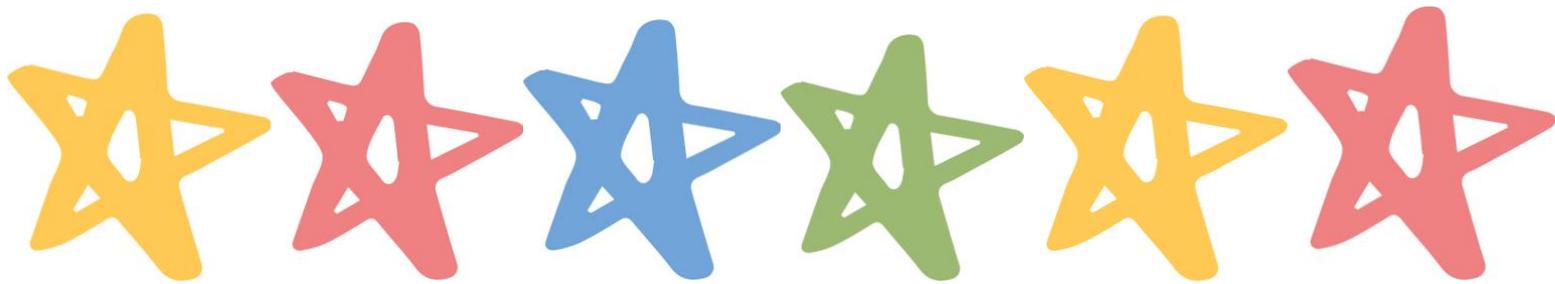
- Make a kitchen band using pans, bowls, spoons etc as instruments. When you join your little one, try showing them how you can change the sounds by combining things differently and using different forces. For instance, does the teaspoon tapped on the wooden bowl sound the same as the



- ladle banged really hard on the pan? Your child will be learning how to distinguish between sounds which is really helpful for developing new words and speech sounds.
- Make a singing bag! Have a hunt around the house for items which your child can associate with a particular nursery rhyme. For example, a toy bus for 'Wheels on the Bus', a toy spider for "Incy Wincy", a picture of a star for 'Twinkle Twinkle' or a bathtime toy boat for "Row your Boat". Bring the bag out when you want to have a quiet time and let your child choose one item from the bag at a time which will indicate to them which song you are going to sing together. Singing is hands down one of the most important things you can do for your child's language development, as they get to use their voices in a safe way and hear so many different tones, rhythms and words all at once!
- Look at photos of family and friends on your phone with your child, naming them, talking simply about things you have done

with them. If you have a printer, you could make a simple little book of photos for your child to access freely. As we can't see our wider family and friends in the flesh at the moment, this is really valuable in reminding your child about the pleasure of relationships with other people.

- Have a picnic tea party on the floor either with a toy tea set or small items of crockery. Have water to pour, raisins to share out with the teddies, butter to spread on bread etc. Chat to your little one, naming the items of food and encourage them



- to share it with all the 'guests'. There are lots of opportunities here for new vocabulary – food names, body parts and simple counting.
- Make a story den! Throw a sheet over the kitchen table, add blankets, cushions, books and crawl in together. Let your little one choose a story and enjoy! If you have stories which include a repeated refrain with lots of opportunities to repeat and/or books with flaps to enable your child to be involved ... even better. Sharing a story regularly is a really important thing to do with your little one, bringing them the richness and enjoyment of the spoken word and the closeness of a magical one to one experience.

Have Fun!