

## **Stages of “Object Play”**

*Understanding your child's play*

During play your child is working hard to understand their world and how things work. Children usually go through three main stages of play\*. These stages are important to understand so that as parents and caregivers we can encourage and direct these different milestones in development.

### **Manipulation**

Think of a baby with some blocks. What would she do? Put them in her mouth. Bang two of them together. Drop them. Throw them. The baby manipulates the objects to understand their physical properties. They will do this with a new toy, food, a spoon, your keys...etc. As long as the object is safe and clean, allow your infant/toddler to explore and manipulate it with their mouths, this is a step in their learning!

### **Mastery**

Think of a toddler with blocks. What would he do? Stack three blocks and knock them down. Build it again; knock it down again, and again, and again! The child repeats the same action over and over again, until the idea is mastered. We can also see this when a child continually: empties the same cupboard, puts things down a vent or in the toilet, covers paper with loads of paint, pours out their milk, knocks over their plate etc.

### **Meaning**

Think of a four year old with blocks. What would he do? Build a castle. Make a fence for his animals. Create a road for trucks and cars. A preschool-aged child puts meaning into the play. Children at this stage begin to develop their understanding of pretend play. A block becomes a cell phone or puppy, wherever their imaginations take them.

*How long does each stage of play last? As long as it takes!*

*\*Beaty, Janice J. *Preschool: Appropriate Practices*. 2nd ed. Harcourt Canada. 1996*

**Presented by the York Region Early Literacy Specialists**

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