

TEACHING THROUGH PLAYTIME

Some of the best toys to play the LSL way may come from your cupboard: measuring cups, spoons, bowls, and even pots and pans. And little ones may love to play pretend as they grow into the toddler years. Using their imagination and playing pretend is an important part of your child's growth and development. It's actually your child practicing language and routines and social interactions. It's also one of the first ways they learn about themselves and the world around them. Pretend play is how little ones practice and develop their social and problem solving skills.

So let's take this cardboard box and walk through how you can use it for play across different ages and stages. I'll show you how to use this plain regular box to become an exciting toy to promote listening, spoken language, and cognitive development.

Here are five examples how you can play the LSL way with the cardboard box, guess what?

1. You can also play peek-a-boo with a box where you're still using audition first and you're using ear contact before eye contact. You're hiding behind the box and you say, where's mommy? Oh, here I am, hi! And then you pop out from the box. So that you're playing all kinds of fun games and peek-a-boo using audition first with a box.
2. As your child becomes a toddler, they will enjoy putting things in the box and taking things out of the box. And this is where you can round up things from your cupboard. Perhaps you have a cup, perhaps you find a bowl, you might have a spoon, and you could even have a plate, and you could have all kinds of fun putting the objects. Let's put the cup in the box. Oh, let's put the spoon in the box. You're putting the spoon in the box. What are you going to put next? Oh, you're putting the bowl in the box! And you're using Play-By-Play or putting words to all their actions as they're putting objects in the box, and then taking items out of the box. Oh, there's our bowl! You're taking it out of the box. Oh, what else is in our box? Oh, you're getting the cup. Let's take the cup out of the box. Oh, what's left? Oh, there's our spoon. Yes, you're taking the spoon out of the box. And then, you practice over and over again of putting things in the box and out of the box.

Why do children love repetition? Because their little brains want all that practice of doing things over and over again. That's how they learn. And it might become kind of boring to you, but your children and your toddlers will enjoy doing it over and over again. So you could also vary the objects that you're putting in. It could be blocks and you could put blocks in the box. You could count how many blocks you're putting in. You could ask your child if they want the red block or the blue block. And then, they put the color that they name in the box. You can even turn it over and you can put things on top of the box and under the box and behind the box and beside the box. A great way then to teach vocabulary and prepositions, all using a cardboard box with your toddler.

3. Your child will like to use the box to play pretend. They may decide to put the box on their head and pretend it's a hat and have all kinds of funny things happen with the box on their head. They may decide to pretend that it's a car by getting a baby doll or a stuffed animal and putting the doll in the box and having all kinds of pretend. Beep, beep, let's go! Where are we going? Oh, let's go to grandma's house. Here we go. One, two, three, go! Push, push, push the box. The box could go slow. It could go fast. It could go crooked. It could drive straight. It could even drive bumpy, couldn't it? In terms of whatever your child is doing, give words to those actions.
4. And as your toddler's growing and becomes a preschooler and becomes in those ages and stages, they may be ready to play the what's missing game. And you, again, can take everyday household items that you have in your house and put them all out. I would start first with three and say we have a bowl and we have a cup and we have a spoon. And with the what's missing game, we're going to use audition first. We're going to again use Play-By-Play. And we're going to be following familiar commands, or familiar directions.

So for example, I'll talk about our objects. And then, I'll ask the child, close your eyes, shh. Open your eyes. And the child opens their eyes and I say, what is missing? The bowl, oh? What is missing? And the child may say, the cup? And you say, yes! The cup is missing. The cup is in the box. And I would have the child take the cup out of the box. And then, it is the child's turn. It's your turn and the child now tells me to say, close your eyes. I close my eyes and the child chooses one object to put in the box. They tell me, open your eyes. I open my eyes. They have to ask me, what is missing? And I have to look and say, oh, is it the spoon? The spoon is in the box or whatever object they put in.

So as your child gets older and gets better at the what's missing game, you can make it more difficult for them or more challenging by adding more objects. In that for example, you could add the plate and you could add a mug. And so that you could add five to eight objects and those could be household objects. They could be toys you have. They could be even articles of clothing around the house. And playing the what's missing game with a larger number of items becomes much more difficult. So a way you can expand playing the missing game with your box.

5. And as your child gets older and their skills begin to develop, you can now play the guessing game or what is it? So I may first start out with three objects and we talk about we have our horse, he lives on the farm, we like to ride him, and he likes to eat grass. Oh, I have an animal. He's a pet and he has fur and he likes to wag his tail and he barks! Oh, and here is my cow. My cow lives on the farm and it gives us milk. So we can talk about the animals. And then, I can say, okay, close your eyes. And I'm going to take my animal. And I'm going to put it in the box. And I'm going to say, open your eyes and you guess, what's in my box? Let me give you clues. This is an animal that lives on the farm. It has a tail and a mane and farmers like to ride them. Do you know what it is? Is it a horse? Yes, it's a horse! There is my horse that was in the box.

And now I can take turns and it can be the child's turn. Now to choose an animal and put it in the box and they're going to give descriptors for me to guess what's in the box by providing the category of the object, by providing descriptors that explain and give clues to what is in the box,

and for me to guess what it is. You can see how the language and cognitive demand and the thinking skills that begin to be required for the child to play and engage in the guessing game or what's in the box.

Can you see how much one cardboard box can do for play, fun, and conversation? Remember, it's not about the toy. It's about how you use it with LSL strategies to engage with your child in whatever they're interested in.

Wherever you are on this journey and however you may be feeling, you are not alone. Hearing First is here to help you every step of the way. Subscribe on YouTube to see new videos from Hearing First.