

NEUROTYPICAL VS. ATYPICAL PLAY IN CHILDREN

	NEUROTYPICAL PLAY DEVELOPMENT	ATYPICAL PLAY DEVELOPMENT
0-24 mo	A child explores the world through senses, mouthing objects, listening to sounds, looking at mobiles, etc.	Child does not explore, does not appear to notice, listen or look at things. No shared cooing or smiling.
10 mo	Social reciprocal interaction begins, especially with parents, playing peek-a-boo with an adult.	Child does not interact, make eye contact, or engage in any basic interacting games.
1-2 yrs	Imitates adults, then may imitate other children. May imitate mommy talking on the phone. Functional play emerges. Playing with a toy as it is intended to be played with, stacking blocks, rolling a car on a surface, etc.	Child does not speak, does not have joint attention, does not play with toys as they are supposed to be played with. Odd or no play. Does not play games with caregivers.
2-3 yrs	<p>Parallel play emerges. Playing side by side with a peer. Having the intention to be in proximity to peers during play.</p> <p>Child may play beside a familiar peer in a sand box. This starts with minimal verbal interaction with peers and gradually increases to watching and imitating peers, showing and commenting to peers, etc.</p> <p>Symbolic play emerges. Pretending with toys that look like real life objects, flying a toy airplane through the sky, pretending to cook with a pan on a play stove, pretending to eat play food, making people or animal figurines walk and talk.</p>	<p>Does not play with peers or show any interest in playing with peers, may not notice other peers. Does not do any imitation based play.</p> <p>Does not do any pretend play. Continues to lack in playing with toys appropriately or engaging caregiver in basic play games.</p>
3 yrs	<p>Play becomes more advanced and may involve peers & others more, may build and construct play objects (train sets, building houses, constructing Legos, making things out of play dough such as flowers, houses, faces, etc.).</p> <p>Child will engage in parallel play, functional, and symbolic play often with other children but still may have difficulty with sharing and cooperative play.</p> <p>Role play and enactment emerges. Pretending to be familiar roles (such as teacher, doctor, bus driver, etc).</p>	<p>Continues to not play with peers or show any interest in playing with peers. If playing with toys, may play with same toys over and over or line toys up continually.</p> <p>Does not do any symbolic play, or role playing. Need for routine and predictability.</p>

*Source: Grant, R.J. (2016). *AutPlay Therapy for Children and Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum*. NY: Routledge.

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4 yrs	<p>Role play and symbolic play become more and more advanced and children begin to learn how to play cooperatively. Pretend roles now may involve peers and still tend to be related to roles they have witnessed whether in person, on TV, or in a book.</p> <p>Theory of mind emerges, the ability to consider that others have different thoughts, feelings, and knowledge than I do. Things can be other than what they seem.</p> <p>Coincides with development of more abstract play such as pretending a pencil is an airplane flying through the sky. Negotiation skills emerge as there is more awareness of other's desires and differences in thinking.</p>	<p>Child continues to lack symbolic and pretend play.</p> <p>Child continues to lack interest in playing with peers.</p> <p>Child will not play with peers in a cooperative fashion.</p> <p>Child shows no theory of mind concept.</p> <p>Child may focus on specific toys/items and be somewhat obsessive and rigid about the toy/item. If playing, may play with the same toy or play same scenario repeated.</p>
5-6 yrs	<p>Child may engage in complex play schemes with multiple other children. Involves all types of play, cooperating and negotiating with peers to develop play schemes and carry them out.</p>	<p>Child's play development has not increased from early developmental levels.</p> <p>Child is narrow in play interests and activities.</p> <p>Child continues to show no interest in playing with peers.</p>
7-10 yrs	<p>Child continues to develop more imaginative play, things that don't actually exist.</p>	<p>Child displays obvious play issues regarding all previously mentioned atypical play characteristics.</p>



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