

## **Schemas – exploring your child’s play patterns**

Is your child frequently emptying the cupboards? Constantly moving your things from place to place, climbing in and out of boxes?

Read on to find out why your child might be doing these things along with ideas of how you can have more fun with your child.

### **Ever heard about ‘Schemas’ ?**

A schema is simply when your child has a pattern of repeated behaviour or play which he or she uses to explore their ideas and thoughts. This repeated action of doing things over and over again may seem strange or even frustrating at times to an adult but through doing this your child is actually building up the connections in the brain. There are many different types of schemas. Some of the most common are transporting, enveloping and containing, trajectory, connecting and rotation

Read on to find out what these schemas sometimes look like.

### **Does your child drive you crazy by picking up and moving objects all over the house?**

Then your child might be using a **transporting schema**. This is when a child moves themselves or objects from one place to another.



### **Ideas of what your child might enjoy**

- Try collecting some old bags or purses and let your child fill them up with items from around the home. Obviously move any fragile or precious objects you do not want your child to touch. Ask your child to show you the things that they have collected in the

basket and talk together about the items. At the end of the play help your child to put the things back in their proper places (eventually your child will be able to do this by themselves around 4 years of age)

- Collect any lengths of fabric or scarves you might have around your home and stuff them into pillowcases or tissue boxes and then let your child explore filling and emptying them again and again.
- If you are going to a park take a bucket or bag with you to collect interesting things along the way
- Save empty boxes & containers as safe things to transport.
- Try collecting old envelopes and fill them with pictures torn from magazines or catalogues

### **Does your child drive you crazy by posting the objects through the cat flap or down the toilet?**

Then your child might be using an **enveloping and containing** schema. This is when a child likes to cover themselves or objects



### **Ideas of what your child might enjoy**

- Provide boxes for your child to play with, big boxes they can get inside, small boxes they can put toys inside.
  - Collect tubes from kitchen rolls and then use large buttons/conkers/ stones to post through them.
  - In the kitchen let your child play with pots, pans, plastic containers with milk carton tops to put in and out.
- whilst playing in the bath provide empty plastic bottles to fill and empty,
  - Make dens with chairs & blankets or under tables.

- Use any large pieces of fabric or old sheets for your child to wrap themselves up in
- Save any used wrapping paper for your child to wrap up some of their favourite toys

**Does your child drive you crazy by launching objects across the room, jumping on the furniture or spraying water by putting fingers under the running tap?**

Then your child might be using **Trajectory schema**. This is when a child is exploring forces and movement, they may like dropping things, running, throwing objects and climbing up things and jumping off things



**Ideas of what your child might enjoy**

- Make some woolly balls with your child, by winding wool around two circles of card. These balls will be safe to use indoors.
  - Play 'catch the teddy' with your child.
- Provide some stretchy material so together you can bounce soft toys up and down, sing 3 little monkeys (teddies) bouncing on the bed.
  - Make paper airplanes with children
- Provide spray bottles, medicine syringes, washing up liquid bottles to use in the bath or garden.
- Hang a ball in the leg of a tight from the washing line in the garden for child to hit with a bat or cardboard tube.
  - Balloons to bat about
- Strips of shredded paper to throw around and watch them falling
  - Chasing Bubbles

**Does your child drive you crazy by lining up all your ornaments or taking all the lids on and off your toiletries?**

Then your child might be using a **Connecting schema**. This is when a child likes to join and fasten things together and then disconnect things by taking them all apart again.



**Ideas of what your child might enjoy**

- Provide blocks or cars that it is ok to line up.
  - Train tracks to connect
- Provide masking tape/ glue/ string/ boxes and help your child to fix them together
  - Use clothes pegs to connect onto pieces of card
    - Make pasta necklaces.
    - Weaving materials and ribbons

**Does your child drive you crazy by playing with the dirty wheels on their buggy?**

Then your child might be using a **rotation schema**. This is when a child is fascinated with spinning and things which turn round and round.



**Ideas of what your child might enjoy**

- Provide toys with wheels such as cars and trains
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- Try putting a ball inside a plastic washing up bowl and get it to turn round and round.
  - Spinning tops and wind up toys
- Try adding whisks/ wooden spoons/ waterwheels at bath time
  - Play rolling balls/ cars to each other
- Let your child watch the washing go round in the machine and play 'guess the item'
  - Just enjoy 'spinning' games r roundabouts at the park
    - Hula Hoops

"A schema seems to be a pattern of behaviour that children do over and over again, often in slightly different ways to help them really understand a concept... For example when a child will drop something out of their high chair and somebody will pick it up – they may repeat this over and over and over because they are beginning to establish that the thing they dropped and the thing that comes back is actually the same thing.."

Maria Robinson, Siren Films Limited 2009

