

2+ Baseline Points: Role Play and Creativity Success Criteria

Skill Step: I explore toys and resources using a variety of senses but also see the object as a whole.

This skill step is significant as, seeing toys as a whole, will underpin my ability to understand what they represent. Although it is still expected that I will explore the parts and detail of an object, especially with new or more sensory stimulating resources, this should now only be sometimes not all of the time. For example, I might briefly explore the wheels spinning around on the car as I move it, but, most of the time I focus on the whole car. Alternatively, sunlight catching a laminated picture or photograph may capture my interest and be explored, but most of the time I see the picture/photograph as a whole, focussing on what it is a picture/photograph depicts. If I continue to seek stimulation from parts of objects or resources as a main focus in play and exploration, particularly to fuel stimulation for one of my senses (e.g. visual) you will want to look at my play communication and developmental profile more closely.

Assessment: Assessment of this skill step will definitely involve targeted observation as I engage with a range of resources, picture material and everyday objects. Do not only look at my exploration of novel or highly visually stimulating resources where close exploration would be a more developmentally appropriate reaction.

Skill Step: I understand what a toy symbolises/represents.

This skill step will be underpinned by the previous step, requiring me to see objects as a whole. It is an important sign of early symbolic awareness, where I begin to understand what toys/resources represent. For example, I understand that the lump of green plastic with four circular lumps of black plastic is actually a representation of a car. I understand that the lump of plastic with facial features, limbs and hair growing out of the top is a representation of a baby. Ideally, this symbolic awareness would have emerged by 18 months, making it a crucial part of the 2+ baseline.

Assessment: You will need to closely observe my reaction to familiar resources, which reflect objects, people or animals that I may be familiar with from home. My reaction may be very brief play such as pushing the car backwards and forwards or briefly hugging the baby before dropping it on the floor. It may be that I extend the duration of my play and/or use the resource for a more complex sequence of pretend play. However, the brief response would be enough to demonstrate this skill step in that I understand what is represented by the resource. Ideally, you will want to see me responding to the resources in this way without you needing to model and demonstrate a response for me to copy first.

Skill Step: I explore creative materials.

Creativity will always be built on a bedrock of exploration and inquisitiveness. It is therefore really important that I, at first, engage with creative resources you make available in an exploratory manner. As my symbolic, fine motor and language skills develop, supported by your modelling and support, this will, hopefully morph into creative use of the same resources, beginning to represent my own ideas and experiences through different media.

Assessment: Make a range of creative resources available, including malleable materials, multi-sensory, hands-on mark-making in addition to that using tools and paint. Model the use of these resources and then carry out targeted observations. Do I access them independently or do I need encouragement? Do I seem to understand and recognise your simple drawings and marks? Do I not access these materials, preferring to use other resources? This will need highlighting as early as possible. If this is the case, what are my other early symbolic skill steps like? Do I understand what objects represent and am I demonstrating early pretend play?

Skill Step: I engage in pretend play, initially, with familiar activities that I can copy.

This skill step will be underpinned by my early symbolic skills, understanding what play resources are depicting. This will also be connected to my early visual skills, requiring me to discriminate visual similarities and differences between objects and then simple picture material and then to store these visual features within my visual memory. Pretend play will usually emerge from me copying behaviours and activities of people and the world around me. It is, therefore, essential that early pretend play opportunities you create for me and my peers reflect what we know and the familiar.

Assessment: This skill step will be assessed through targeted observation in response to the opportunities you create. It may be that I need simple pretend play modelling but you will also want to take a step back and see me demonstrating early, simple, pretend play independently. At this point, play is likely to be solitary, alongside my peers, with turn taking and collaborative play developing over time as a range of my skills develop – symbolic, pragmatic and language skills.