

Toys can be used for more than just playing -- they are great language developing tools.

1. People: Little Tikes, Fisher Price people, Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head for body parts, dolls. Little Tikes and Fisher Price people come in a variety of occupations and the kids with an adult can model a family or school type activity such as circle time, standing in line, putting the girl behind the boy, sitting at a table, etc.
2. Plastic animals can be used to first identify and learn sounds; eventually used to classify animals by jungle, farm, zoo, or pets, water or land animals. Verbs may also be learned in this way (fly, run, swim) as well as other nouns (fur, wings).
3. Play food can be used as well. Food can be eaten or made; additionally, there are many types of food and eating utensils and plates.
4. Play dough can be used too! You can cut, roll, squeeze, squish, press, and pat the play dough. It is also squishy, soft, has different colors, can be long or short, flat, round, etc.
5. Wind up toys are great for speech work! Fast food restaurants also have great wind up toys. Look for wind up toys that rock, spin, or flip over.
6. Vehicles can be used. There are cars, buses, trains, airplanes, ambulances, boats, fire trucks, etc.
7. Blocks are a great way to introduce colors and sizes. Also stack them up and knock them down.
8. Sidewalk chalk. Draw long and short lines, big and little shapes, write letters of the alphabet, and have the children jump on the letters called out by mom or older siblings.
9. Sandboxes can be used! Have a variety of buckets, shovels, molds, etc. Bury little toys, rocks, acorns, and sticks in the sandbox and dig them up.
10. Finger puppets and puppets can be used in telling fairy tales or nursery rhymes.
11. Waterplay in a large tub so children's hearing aids can be worn but the child can spill, splash, and pour water.
12. Mystery Garden by Ravensburg is a great game! It is great for vocabulary, categories, questions, and auditory memory.
13. Secret Square is a board game that is made by University Games. It is available at toy stores and some specialty toy stores and some educational catalogs. It's a great way to introduce new vocabulary, for categories, for memory games, and for introducing question asking and answering, and finally, for playing the game as it was intended. It is the kind of game where you can make up your own rules.