

Toy and Activity Guide

(List of toys and activities focus on **DIR**® levels)



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The toy/gift ideas were compiled from a combination of the following areas: Positive, relational experiences with children and their families during P.L.A.Y. Project® home visits and/or with A Total Approach center based clients, parents in general and ATA therapist individual recommendations, online research from individual reviews and specified toy catalog exploration. The majority of toys/games are categorized by themes of play ideas.

Age level range 2 years up to age 10+.

DIR® stands for **Developmental, Individual-Difference, Relationship Based.**

Dr. Greenspan and Dr. Wieder developed what they call a functional developmental roadmap where we now understand to be the core levels that synthesize and integrate all of the different developmental capacities. The six core levels are briefly explained below and on the following pages will state which toy/activity may support those levels. E.g. -Dress up/role play activities provide the opportunity to focus on level 3 and 4 leading into 5.

Level 1: The Ability of Regulation and Shared Attention

Level 2: Engagement with Warmth, Trust and Intimacy

Level 3: Intentional Two-way Communication

Level 4: Interactive problem solving/use of gestures in a continuous flow.

Level 5: Functional use of Ideas, emotional/symbolic thinking (In language, for example, it would be, "Me hungry, juice please", or in pretend play, feeding/ hugging the characters, themes of power and magic, etc....)

Level 6: Ability to Build Bridges Between Ideas (Logical thinking and the ability to shift gears between reality and fantasy.)



Water play toys activities & other tactile and science experimental activities:

Tactile play provide opportunities for regulation/exploration (level 1), engagement (2) leading to expansion of circles of communication (3) and scaffold to level 4 with problem solving, sequencing, pretend play themes. Most toys are found on amazon.com, on line at Toys R Us, Target and individual stores mentioned. Otherwise will be specified under description. Ages participating in most tactile experiences during play sessions started as early as age 2-10 with full adult supervision.

The Ultimate Book of Kid Concoctions:

By John E. Thomas & Danita Pagel –

More than 65 tactile based recipes to create using common household ingredients.

(Very successful during P.L.A.Y. Project visits especially volcano experiments) Found in various bookstores.

Helpful Tips during play – allow time for exploration, present tools for mixing/pouring various size containers/color bath tablets/eye dropper/paint brushes and have pretend play figures/animals/vehicles, etc.... available when your child is ready for expansion. Have fun!

Play doh – various sets:

(e.g. Burger Builder & Magic Swirl Ice Cream Shop for expansion to level 3 & 4) Kids seem to enjoy.

Gluten free recipes to create dough found on line

Aqua Sand:

Pour into water, sculpt, take it out and wow It's dry Medium is also reusable Successful at play sessions

Bendaroos or Wikkistix:

Colored wax sticks – ideas - create numbers, letters, animals, etc... direction guide based on kit purchased.

Children/parents have enjoyed exploring together and Provided tactile and creative exploration.

Found at locations mentioned above and in craft stores

Moon Sand Moon dough:

Various play sets available for expansion to level 3 & 4

- pretend play) P.L.A.Y. Project family positive feedback

Finger-paints, window markers:

Engagement, scaffold to higher levels during play sessions

Disney / Pixar CARS Color Changers and play set:

Lightning McQueen and other CARS characters

Successful with children promoting spontaneous language

and opening more circles of communication due to

high interest in McQueen character. Will change color

quickly based on temperatures warm to cold and

back again and again! (need to be icy cold/ warm contrast for best results)



Beginner's Science Lab (Found online at www.toystogrowon.com)

Children discover the magic of science...with a ready-to-use lab designed just for beginners! Kids just follow the step-by-step instructions to complete 12 simple experiments—from building a volcano and growing colorful crystals to creating realistic

snow and experimenting with space sand! Ages recommended 5-12

*Functional/structured activity ideas:
Cooking/baking – a natural tactile experience,
promotes sequencing/ problem solving and
family time.*





Gross Motor activities below are mostly recommended by therapists and/or parents

Activities provide opportunities for sensory input – e.g. proprioceptive, vestibular, calming, alerting, postural work, motor planning, etc. Some of the equipment promotes child to create obstacle courses for higher-level interactions and overall physical exercise while having fun. See your OT and PT for your individual child’s sensory programming needs.

Plasma Car or Scooter - Kids hop on and can put their feet up, rotating steering wheel from side to side to go forward –smoother surface, faster it goes – kids & adults up to 200 lbs. – vestibular & motor planning. Positive reviews from parents. (*amazon.com & funandfunction.co, Youngexplorers.com*)

Razor scooters - various types to view on line based on age – encourage balance, motor planning and provide regulation

Fun Slides - Fits over shoes. Ages 3 & up P.L.A.Y. Project - positive experiences. Just need area of carpet for best results. (*Target stores & hearthsong.com*).

Moon Shoes - Fits over shoes (based on reviews for ages 8 & up) – (*back to basictoys.com & funandfunction.com*)

Moon Walkers - slip over socks or bear feet – one size ages 5+ - Moon shoe type, but looks more like a platform flip flop type. (*Youngexplorers.com*)

Super Fun stilts - ages 6 & up (*hearthsong.com*)

Sit N Spin - recommended more for toddlers

Balance boards - ages 3-7 two types – side to side or all around (*Toys to Grow on – www.ttgo.com*)

Additional balance boards - Balance Board (*exclusive in hearthsong.com*) ages 5 & up – challenge to guide five colored balls thru maze on surface by moving from side to side/back and forth.

Wobble Deck - Works muscles and mind! Follow game’s audio commands while on board. Opportunity to build concentration, coordination and quick reflexes. Positive reviews from parents. Ages 5 +. (*mindware.com*)

Therapy balls, scooters & various therapy equipment - (see your OT & PT for more specific suggestions based on your individual child’s sensory programming needs) *Funandfunction.com, www.target.com*).

Tunnels, tents, ball pit play centers – different assortment. Recommended are ones that have mesh see through sections. Provide more security during beginning exploration. Also parent suggest tunnels and tents that are easy open and close. See online selection and customer ratings at Amazon.com to best fit your play environment.

Glow in the dark themed toy activities and ideas:

Playing in the dark creates drama, mystery encouraging a scaffold to higher order thinking.

Crayola Glow Station - Draw with a penlight stylus to draw on the light-sensitive surface to create glow in the dark drawings or tracings. It requires a darkened space. It fades away in a few minutes and can create drawings over and over. Exploration experience - wave the wand over objects like keys, shapes, hand and the shape of object "magically" appears on surface .Provides consistent engagement during Floortime sessions with drama when lights are dimmed or dark space like a tent. (*Target, amazon.com, craft stores*). It is an award winner of 2009.

Finger flashlights - Colored lights that you can put on fingers or hold in hand and play various light games. Able to find at Five below, Oriental Trading online and craft stores.

Crayola Glow Dome: Kid can draw directly on the clear plastic dome and center panel with included neon markers – a drawback is that the markers do not last very long if not properly capped. It is innovative how kids can control the different speeds and light settings. Many opportunities for exploration and drama created with the lights out.



Mini Plasma Ball – Electric lamp – referred to as the “Magic ball.” It is a big hit with an array of children ages 5 and up. It promotes language and back and forth interactions, symbolic ideas of level 4 and 5. When anyone touches the dome a stream of light moves to the direction of your fingers. Children really like the sound mode button particularly because they can control when it lights up and stops by their voice and individual sounds/vibrations. (amazon.com, target.com and other unique websites when you Google it.)



Other ideas for glow in the dark fun: Keep an assortment of different size flashlights. Play hide n seek and treasure hunts with use of flashlights. Dollar stores/craft stores carry small flashlights that have attachments that project images on the wall. (*Note safety concern with attachments that can be put in the mouth) Opportunity to create stories on the walls/ceilings, etc....

Structured games promote model of back and forth turn taking or require simple one or two-step directions. Level of interest is all depending on individual child’s developmental level.

Don’t Break the Ice – Consistently successful for engagement during Floortime due to the set-up process and back and forth of knocking the ice blocks down. Promotes simple sequencing and problem solving. Recommend using a different tool like a play hammer if difficult for some children to manipulate. 4 years+

Elefun – Butterfly catching game. Very visual and one or many children can play together scurrying to find the “butterflies” that shoot out of the elephant’s trunk Ages 3 +

Hungry Hungry Hippos – Fast paced game where there is a race for hippos to “eat” the marbles. Kids seem to enjoy! (Caution for children that put objects in mouth) Ages 4 +

Honey Bee tree – (Award Winner) Kids carefully remove the leaves without waking the marble like “bees.”
Ages 3+

Pizza Pile Up game – Help Poppa pile on toppings to make a pizza. Place toppings on pizza without toppling the pie. Includes fun plastic ingredients of cheese, tomatoes, mushrooms and pepperoni pieces. (Different ways to modify game)

Hiss card game - As each Hiss snake slithers its way across the playing area it introduces color identification and visual logic: Does it make sense to have a snake with two tails and no head? Are those two colors the same or not? Even elementary counting skills come into play during scoring at the end of the game.
Recommended age 3+

Zimbbos

Irresistible stacking game for kids
Includes 10 wooden elephants, 5 wooden jokers, 3 wooden balancing bars, 1 wooden die and illustrated rules
Winner of multiple awards and parents recommend

- ❖ For 1 to 4 players Ages 3+
- ❖ Blue Orange plants two trees for every tree used to produce their games

Guess Who A wonderful blend of deduction with a form of 20 Questions. Two players try to deduce the identity of their opponent's "Mystery Person." Using game boards with 48 frames apiece and an equal number of cards displaying character faces, players ask one another yes or no questions that help narrow the pool of possibilities. Through process of elimination, the identity of the Mystery Person slowly becomes evident. Age range from 6-12

Cranium Cariboo – The magical treasure hunt game designed especially for young children. Unlock secret doors to find the treasure. Ages 3 + Cranium games in general parents highly recommend. Refer to age range when searching for selection of games. (*fatbrain.com, target.com*)

Other Cranium games recommended by parents 3 +:

Duck Duck 1 2 3 - Mama’s ducklings are loose in the park, playground and at the picnic. Pick up all the lost baby ducklings and take them to the pond. Spinner and board game.

Puppy Pals Bingo – Match colors, shapes, patterns. Make a match to give a puppy a home. Three ways to match and learn.

Around the House Treasure Hunt Game – Hunt for hidden treasure at home. Includes 30 riddle clues that lead children from one place to the next until they find the treasure of gold coins. Ages 4-10 (*Toys to Grow on – www.ttgo.com*)



Treasure hunts in general are very successful for P.L.A.Y. Project families and Floortime sessions. Other ideas for expansion of pretend play and power themes–Pirate treasure hunts – such fun!

Step To It – Kids have to walk, hop, and jump all around the house. Ask a player to give you a card with a specific number of steps to take. Then choose an object that you think you can reach in exactly that number. Can you walk to the fridge in 9 steps? How about hop to something red in 15? Reach your goal and you walk away with a win! Potential to work on higher order of thinking during Floortime sessions. 5+ (*Fatbrain.com*)

Scavenger Hunt for Kids Game – With the 2-minute timer set, kids quickly search the room for a hat, a coin or something blue! Seems great for peer groups. Ages 6 + (*Youngexplorers.com*)

Scaventure game – Award winner Team playing game that provides opportunities to go on nature hunt, draw ideas based on card directions. 6+ (*amazon.com*,

Don't Wake Daddy

Shhh! If you can sneak past sleeping Daddy without waking him, you can have that midnight snack you're craving. The first person to slip around all these obstreperous obstacles to get to the fridge wins. Players spin a spinner to determine what color space they'll move to. If the player's card doesn't match the picture on the space, Daddy's alarm clock button must be pushed the number of times indicated. Just hope that Daddy will sleep through the alarm. If not, he'll pop up and make his nightcap fly off! For two to four players. Ages 4+
Fun and led to emotional focus during P.L.A.Y. Project visits!

WHAC-A-MOLE Arcade Game: A 1-2 player game based on the classic arcade game where moles pop out and you whack them. Play against the clock or against a friend. Features lights and sounds and loads of fun.

Other fun games enjoyed by many at A Total Approach.

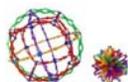
- ❖ **Candy Land**
- ❖ **Chutes and Ladders**
- ❖ **Battle tops**
- ❖ **Animal Soup**

Strategy and Logical thinking focus

- ❖ **Sorry**
- ❖ **Uno**
- ❖ **Master Mind**
- ❖ **Ravensburger Labrynth**
- ❖ **Battleship**
- ❖



The big winners expressed by our DIR kids - Promotes play ideas of exploration (Level 1) up to (Levels 4, 5, & 6) deepening the plot and higher order of thinking



Hoberman Sphere - Unfolding Architecture - Expands in Volume -- These spheres expand from 9.5" or 5.5" (mini) clusters to 30" or 12" (mini) geodesic spheres with just a little pressure. Push gently and they collapse back to their original condensed form. Fully assembled. This is highly recommended by Floortime therapist – huge success with all ages of children beginning at age 2 to age 10+. Smaller children can problem solve to fit inside and older children can fit it over their head. Targets DIR levels 1-6 with Floortime knowledge of scaffolding strategies. Immediate exploration and opportunities for problem solving even w/ children that have motor planning challenges. The structure is rigid enough to roll and throw, yet if touched in the right way, it will suddenly collapse again. Size used and recommended – large -30". (Found on amazon.com, museumstore.com)



Snap Circuits® makes learning electronics easy and fun! Just follow the colorful pictures in our manual and build exciting projects such as AM radios; burglar alarms; doorbells and much more! You can even play electronic games with your friends. All parts are mounted on plastic modules and snap together with ease. Enjoy hours of educational fun while learning about electronics. No tools required. Includes Projects 1-101 manual. Awards: The National Parenting Center-Seal of Approval, Dr. Toy 100 Best Children's Products, Dr. Toy Best Educational Products Highly recommended by ATA therapists and families. Ages 8 and up, but our kiddos 5 and up love exploring it to when carefully supervised!

Features

Build over 100 projects including:

- Flying Saucer
- Spin draw
- Sound Activator
- Alarm Circuit



Angry Birds: Knock on Wood Game - Based on the on the best-selling phone app game, Angry Birds Now kids can play their #1 favorite app game in real life. Build, launch and destroy with an exciting skill-and-action Features three Angry Birds, green pigs, one slingshot-style launcher, structure pieces and mission cards. For 2 or 4 players – A favorite of kids of all ages. Nice motor planning, problem solving focus as well.



Robot claw: Have fun picking up items with the robot claw! The claw makes a ratchet sound when you squeeze the handle. This has a strong grip, picks up almost everything! Fun for all ages and useful for hard to reach places. Another favorite for Floortime – promotes problem solving, motor planning, abstract thinking, ideas of power and so on... Recommended for ages 5 and up, but our younger kids are intrigued by it as well. It is a nice playful obstruction tool for parents/play partners coached during P.L.A.Y. Project! (Particular one was found in Toys R Us, but other variations found at Five Below stores and online)



Marble Race by Imaginarium – Many children of different age ranges and developmental levels show great interest when presented this activity. Encourages problem solving, sequencing, interactive teamwork and self-esteem “building” as well! Build the maze various ways and watch the marbles twist and turn down the track. (Caution: Marbles are a choking hazard for young children or children that may put objects in mouth) (*Toys R Us, youngexplorers.com*)



Cardboard building bricks – Fun engagement, anticipation of crashing, leading to expansion for higher DIR levels during P.L.A.Y. Project visits beginning with children at ages 2 and up. Found in various stores and websites such as *Target, Melissa & Doug.com, amazon.com, toys r us, craft stores.*



Crocodile Dentist – Children simply pushes on crocodile’s tooth one at a time until the mouth “snaps” safely closed. Exploratory and rapid turn-taking opportunities. It is unpredictable each time to what tooth will close the mouth. Builds anticipation, drama, relationship building. Used regularly for P.L.A.Y. Project & other Floortime sessions leading to level 3 & 4 – recommended for ages 4 & up, however successful experiences with younger and older children engaging in simple game play) *www.target.com. One drawback – the one that is sold now is much smaller than one presented to children in Play Project. It is the older game. Still works, but larger one is more dramatic.*



Melissa & Doug Castle – This has been very popular and a safe place during many children’s DIR sessions to explore pretend play ideas and work on those ideas expanding into the deeper symbolic world. All wood construction. Note - castle interactions described is based on plainer structure than the newer model, however receives good reviews on *amazon.com.*

Fisher-Price Imaginext Eagle Talon Castle and other castles: Check out varieties at *Amazon.com.* This particular one has really good parent reviews. It has sound and light effects. Many kids of all ages have been enjoying an older version of this castle during Floortime sessions so recommended for children that are working to expand on story ideas including bad guys and good guy characters. You can also take batteries out or switch sound off if too overwhelming when first exploring.



Musical instruments – (based on child’s interest & level of development) – drums (without a lot of buttons or animation), harmonica, horn, xylophone, shakers, piano etc.... Drum play is consistently successful with engaging children during P.L.A.Y. Project for timing and rhythm leading to more back and forth.

Discussed on many P.L.A.Y Project family feedback DVDs how important music is for the rhythmicity and timing work of the temporal lobe.

Favorite children's music CDs to dance and sing along.



Pretend Play Themes toys and tools listed below encourage imaginative play ideas dealing with a child's sense of self, perspective taking, exploration and processing of good vs. bad roles in safe way through pretend and so on...

Dress up clothes/hats/masks – Occupations, fantasy, Superheroes, princess, animals, etc.... (www.ttgo.com, youngexplores.com, *Dollar Stores*, *craft stores*, etc....)

Puppets – assortment of animals, characters, monsters, Children often request for puppets that can open their mouths. etc.... Consistent engagement and potential to scaffold to level 4 and 5 during Floortime. (youngexplorers.com, *Dollar stores*, *Orientaltrading.com*, *toys to grow on*, etc....)

Pretend Doctor's kit (www.ttgo.com, youngexplorers.com, hearthsong.com, *Toys R Us*)

Pretend food & Kitchen set, accessories (Youngexplorers.com, hearthsong.com, constructiveplaythings.com, amazon.com)

Pretend Tool bench/ tools – (*Toys to Grow on*, youngexplorers.com, *toys r Us*, *Target*, etc....)

Foam swords and magic wands – found in *Dollar stores*, *craft stores* and *Five below* too.

Dolls and accessories for dolls – *Can* find in a variety of stores mentioned throughout to work on nurturance play. Plush animals and characters can be used for nurturance as well.



Barbie play sets including the camper and Puppy pool are highly recommended for fun water play and building on fun adventures with characters.



Favorite TV/Video character figures – plush and plastic small figures (*Target*, *Toys R Us*, *Wal-Mart*, *Kohl's*, etc....) Most popular are *Angry Birds*, *Disney Toy Story Woody* (removable hat) and *Buzz Light-year*, *CARS Lighting McQueen* and *TV Dora* characters, *Diego*, *Disney Princesses* and *Power Rangers*

Play cars/ buses/ trains/ boats, etc.... – Figures can sequence to locations encouraging a deepening of pretend story ideas as well as playing out reality based themes.

Play Animals – farm/jungle, friendly, powerful, fierce, e.g. lions, tigers, bears, sharks, fish, elephants, giraffes, dogs, cats, dragons, horses, cows, birds, etc....

Dollhouse and play locations – Preferably without animation (*youngexplorers.com, www. ttgo.com, Target, etc....*). Dollhouse with stairs recommended, as well as a variety of other locations like farms, train stations, gas stations, town building, etc....

Play Mobile play sets – Promotes kids to use their imagination, interactively problem solve and bring in details of level 4 -6 story and play ideas. It is recommended for children that have the ability to handle many small intricate pieces. Stress that are a great deal of accessories with each set. Various themed sets available are camping, hospital, animal nursery, pirate, dragon, castle. It can be very time consuming to build and definitely needs an adult to take charge of assembly. Once assembling process is over, it provides opportunity for higher order of thinking. (*amazon.com, playmobile.com, Toys R Us*)

Melissa & Doug Ice cream scoop set - magnetic four flavors of wooden ice cream scoops, two cones, scoopers and sturdy box included. Introduction to simple level 4 pretend play ideas. A big favorite with P.L.A.Y. Project kids (*Found on amazon.com, Toys R Us, fatbrain.com*)

Melissa & Doug pretend food products – pizza, sandwiches, fruits/vegetables and Happy Birthday themes all with Velcro to “cut,” etc.... A big favorite with P.L.A.Y. Project kids (*amazon.com, toysrus.com, Marshalls, craft stores, etc....*)

Cash Register – Look for toys without a lot of talking or singing for focus on back and forth interactions. (*Youngexplorers.com, Toys R us, etc....*)



Emotional tools for parents to help their children work through emotional and symbolic DIR levels



The Berenstain bear books – This series of books come highly recommended from our experienced DIR parents. They have been wonderful resources to help their children understand and deal with a variety of emotional themes and social experiences in a positive way. Recommended age beginning at 4.



Kimochi is Japanese for feeling. Kimochis are made out of felt in bright colors with a facial expression on one side and the name of the emotion on the other side. Children learn by placing the cushion that best matches their feelings. The process can calm comfort and instills confidence when having a physical item to help them express how they are feeling each day. Other ideas, draw a Kimochi from a hat and take turns acting out the feelings – Just one of the awesome ideas created by our ATA children when exploring in play!



Lastly - Don't forget about the packaging! - Save your boxes and packing peanuts or air packs from shipping.

Playing with boxes, different kinds of yarn, crepe paper ribbon, craft materials of construction paper, markers, stickers, stampers, crayons, recyclable materials of paper towel rolls and paper plates, popsicle sticks, masking tape and so on... can provide fun, ideas for expansion and creative moments together as well! This activity is important for abstract and representational thinking!

This toy/activity guide is a tribute to all of the past and present P.L.A.Y. Project and Floortime families that have devoted so much of their time "playing" with their children to support them to reach their highest potential. It continues to be an inspiration being able to witness the incredible bonding process between child and parent as they triumph over developmental obstacles together!
Thank You!

Any questions or comments
Please contact janine@atotalapproach.com
Floortime Practitioner/P.L.A.Y. Project certificate

Hope some of these ideas are helpful!
Have Fun!