

## IMITATION

### What is imitation?

Imitation is copying other people. It can include copying their:

- **Actions, using objects** (e.g. shaking a maraca, rolling a ball)
- **Gestures and body movements** (e.g. clapping, waving)
- **Sounds and words.**

Children use imitation right from being a tiny baby, throughout early childhood, to have social interactions, share emotions, take turns and learn new things. Children first imitate actions with objects, then go on to imitate gestures, then sounds and words.

Good imitation skills support joint engagement, language development, play skills, and social play. We work on imitation during natural social interactions, using their interests to motivate them to imitate us. Learning to imitate with toys or objects is the first step, supporting play and social communication.

### How to develop imitation skills?



**Imitate your child's actions.** For example, if they are rolling cars up and down on the table, you could get a car and do the same. Join in with something your child is doing, and keep imitating them until they seem to notice.



**Add something.** Add in a small idea of your own that is related to the play, for example after rolling a car for a while, you could knock it off the table.



**Support your child to imitate an action.** Pause and wait 10 seconds to see if your child might copy you. If they don't, cue them by giving them the object, and maybe guide them with your hand over their hand.



**Encourage your child to keep it going.** Be enthusiastic and animated. Comment using simple words and phrases as you play. Repeat these lots of times, for example every time you knock the car off the table, say "off".