

Dramatic Play Ideas

The Dramatic Play area is one of the most popular and important centers for learning through play in a Pre-K classroom. Teachers should take care to ensure sure this area is well-equipped with a variety of materials designed to encourage imaginative play. Traditionally the dramatic play area has been referred to as the “housekeeping” area but when children interact with one another in this area, they often act out scenes from other aspects of their lives such as grocery stores, doctor’s offices, classrooms, hair salons, or restaurants. This type of imaginative play is an essential part of a young child’s developmental learning process because it allows them to develop skills in areas such as literacy, math, social studies, and abstract thinking. While creating a restaurant, twirling around in a fancy costume, stomping around in grown-up shoes, or wearing the king’s crown, your Pre-K children are learning to solve problems, play cooperatively, share responsibility, and think creatively. Use the ideas below for creating a dramatic play area that encourages your young children to use their imaginations in meaningful play.

Housekeeping

- Elementary School – plastic lunch box, cafeteria trays, backpack, spiral notebook, pencils, large chalkboard and chalk
- Home living – dolls, doll beds, high-chair, baby bottles, diaper bag, dress-up clothes (male and female), telephone, phone book, magazines and newspapers, feather duster
- Kitchen – pots and pans, potholders, empty food containers, table and chairs, plates, utensils (eating and cooking), placemats, cups, napkins, salt and pepper shakers, plastic food, cook books or recipe cards, plastic flowers in a vase, dishtowels, sponge, empty liquid soap container, dish drying rack

Fantasy

- Animals – plastic animal noses, animal ear headbands, animal costumes
- Circus – clown shoes, noses, and clothes, circus program, hula hoops, megaphone, popcorn bags
- Storybook characters – dress up clothes or costumes, books or posters of the characters

Leisure

- Football – jersey, helmet, shoes with plastic cleats
- Camping – tent, sleeping bag, “campfire” made from paper towel tubes and tissue paper, lantern
- Gardening – gardening gloves, plastic gardening tools, empty seed packets, kneeling pad, small wheelbarrow, spray bottles, watering can, sunglasses, straw hats
- Golf – plaid pants and skirts, sweater vests, golf caps, plastic golf clubs, ping pong balls (instead of hard golf balls), saddle oxford shoes
- Hiking – hiking boots, compass, walking stick, hat, backpack, canteen/water bottle
- Picnicking – picnic blanket/table cloth, picnic basket, cooler, pretend ants, sunglasses, straw hats
- Soccer – soccer shorts, shin guards, shoes with plastic cleats

- Vacation – travel brochures or posters, maps, binoculars, compass, sunglasses, floral shirts, grass skirts, empty sunscreen bottles, beach chairs, beach towels, straw hats, colorful plastic cups and plates, camera

Different kinds of work

- Artist – berets, sketch pads, large loose fitting shirts, table top easel, “paintings”, paint brushes, color palate, pottery wheels, pottery, sculptures, art smocks
- Barber/Beauty Shop – curlers, hair dryers and curling irons (without the cords), hair brushes/combs/picks, shower caps, barber capes, magazines with pictures of various hairstyles, empty shampoo and hairspray bottles, wigs, cash register and play money
- Construction Work - hard hat, tool belt, plastic tools, plastic workbench, work boots, safety goggles, work gloves, lunchbox, walkie- talkies, construction signs, orange construction tape (or ribbon)
- Doctor’s office – lab coat, “scrub” shirts, surgical masks, plastic syringes, stethoscope, pretend prescription pad and writing utensils, cotton balls, sheets of white butcher paper, appointment book, magazines for the waiting area
- Florist – plastic/silk flowers, plastic vases, styrofoam, tissue paper, cellophane, scotch tape, small gift cards and writing utensils, invoice pad, delivery truck made from a cardboard box
- Ice Cream Store – scoops, large pom-poms or cotton balls, empty ice cream topping bottles, napkins, spoons, dishes, menu (store donated or teacher made), construction paper sprinkles and toppings, empty ice cream containers, cash register and play money, hats/shirts with ice cream store logos
- Office – phone, rolodex, computer keyboard or typewriter, briefcase, portfolio, old calculator, desk calendar, file folders, business cards, writing utensils, paper clips, legal pads, note pads, sticky notes, message book, yellow pages phone book
- Military – camouflage shirts and hats, canteen, sunglasses, hiking boots, walkie-talkies
- Musician – microphones, head phones, records/CDs/tapes, instruments, flashy clothes, sunglasses
- Post Office – mailbox, mail bins, stamps/stickers, old stationary and envelopes, junk mail, writing utensils, cash register and play money, post office uniform or hats, stamp brochures, cardboard boxes, bubble wrap, packing tape
- Restaurant – menu (restaurant donated or teacher made), apron, tray, food containers, plastic food, order pad and writing utensils, cash register and play money, old credit cards, salt and pepper shakers, empty condiment containers, flowers in a vase, placemats/tablecloths/napkins, dishes, silverware, water pitcher, waiter/waitress uniform, chef hat
- Supermarket/Grocery Store – plastic shopping baskets and child-sized push carts, plastic fruit and vegetables, scales for weighing, cash register, cash register tape, play money, play credit cards, play checks, aprons/shirts/hats with grocery logos, food boxes/cans/bottles, coupons, paper grocery bags, department signs
- Veterinarian Office – stuffed animals, stethoscope, doctor’s kit, grooming brushes, empty grooming bottles, towels, pet bowls, empty pet food containers, dog bones, lab coat and “scrub” shirts, appointment book and writing utensils, cash register and play money, posters of pets, dog/cat reference books.

