

# What is a schema?

A young child with light hair, wearing a green short-sleeved shirt, is sitting on a green mat. The child is looking down at a yellow ball in their hands. The background is a soft, out-of-focus indoor setting.

Does your child constantly line toys up, or insist on filling boxes and bags?

Do they love to hide under the table, or paint their arms instead of a picture?

These repeated behaviours can be completely normal and may mean they are experiencing a 'schema'.



## **Things to know**

- ✓ Schemas are patterns of play that children show whilst they are learning how things work.
- ✓ Children may 'test out' a schema on different objects, to see how it affects things. Children cannot be taught a schema, but may not always have the same schema.
- ✓ When they are involved in a schema it might seem like they are "obsessed" with doing things a certain way.
- ✓ There are several types of schemas and ways you can help your child whilst they are learning.

## **Well-known schemas**

- Transporting
- Containing / Enveloping
- Positioning
- Trajectory
- Transforming
- Rotation
- Connecting
- Going through boundaries
- Enclosure

# Transporting



## Things you might notice:

- Carrying objects between places.
- Pushing a buggy with objects in.
- Carrying buckets of sand or water.
- Putting everything in the bin.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Taking toys outdoors.
- ✓ Train sets with carts.
- ✓ Putting items in shopping trolley.
- ✓ Using wheelbarrows or toys with wheels.

# Containing / Enveloping



## Things you might notice:

- Climbing inside/putting things inside.
- Painting over a whole picture or hands.
- Dressing up in hats and coats.
- Pretending to wrap up presents.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Den building.
- ✓ Sock puppets.
- ✓ Pass the parcel (paper and sticky tape).
- ✓ Burying treasure in sand.
- ✓ Dressing doll or teddy.
- ✓ Putting teddy to bed.

# Positioning



## Things you might notice:

- Painting around the edge of something.
- Putting things on their head.
- Not wanting foods to touch.
- Playing under the table.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Opportunities to sort objects
- ✓ Lining each other up, e.g. brother, sister, mummy, daddy.
- ✓ Making mosaics.
- ✓ Playing with pegboards.

# Trajectory



## Things you might notice:

- Lining things up.
- Running back and forth.
- Playing with sticks and swords.
- Throwing objects.
- Dropping things (e.g. from highchair).

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Throwing games – balls, beanbags, balloons.
- ✓ Kicking balls.
- ✓ Chasing bubbles.
- ✓ Paper aeroplanes.
- ✓ Dominoes.
- ✓ Cars and ramps.
- ✓ Blow-painting.



# Transforming



## Things you might notice:

- Fascinated by mixing things, or objects that melt.
- Wanting to add water to things, e.g. sand, dinner.
- Rubbing cream or paint on themselves.
- Never staying clean!

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Mud kitchens.
- ✓ Baking.
- ✓ Mixing paint colours.
- ✓ Freezing flowers/toysin a tray.
- ✓ Making play-dough.
- ✓ Blowing bubbles.

# Rotation



## Things you might notice:

- Fascinated by turning taps on and off.
- Turning knobs on toys and play kitchen appliances.
- Spinning toys.
- Winding objects up.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Play on park roundabout.
- ✓ Toys with wheels to spin.
- ✓ Jars and tubs with screw tops.
- ✓ Mixing things – cake, sand, water.
- ✓ Toys with cogs and gears.



# Connecting



## Things you might notice:

- Sticking or tying things together.
- Enjoying construction toys.
- Sticking tape between objects such as tables and chairs.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Junk modelling.
- ✓ Make paper chains.
- ✓ Stapling and sticking with masking tape.
- ✓ Building blocks/magnets.
- ✓ Connecting train tracks or marble runs.

# Going through boundaries



## Things you might notice:

- Crashing cars or toys into walls they have built.
- Putting objects or themselves through a tunnel.
- Squeezing toys through another object.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Putting toys or water through pipes.
- ✓ Marble runs.
- ✓ Threading toys.
- ✓ Making postboxes.
- ✓ Funnels.

# Enclosure



## Things you might notice:

- Playing with belts and bracelets.
- Drawing/painting objects with a beginning and end, e.g. circle.
- Putting objects inside boxes.

## What can you do to help?

- ✓ Building farmyard for animals.
- ✓ Make a boat from a cardboard box.
- ✓ Building dens.
- ✓ Framing their pictures.
- ✓ Putting things away in boxes.

# Contact and social media



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