

■ Learning Through Play

Just Imagine!

You know that it's natural for your young child to be active. So if you dread waiting rooms and long lines, join the club. Most everyone with a preschooler knows the challenge of trying to keep a youngster busy while the cashier packs the grocery bags or the pediatrician sees the patient before you. The key is to be prepared with conversation starters that excite your child's creative-thinking processes and get imaginative juices flowing.



■ On line at the grocery store:

- Let's pretend we're going to have a dinner party. Who would you like to invite? What should we serve?
- What would you like to serve if we had a birthday party at the zoo for all the animals?
- Let's list all our favorite foods. I'll say one, then you say one.

■ In the doctor's office:

- If we could be anywhere in the world, where would you want to be? What does it look like there?
- Let's make up a story about a little girl (or boy) who was sick and then got better. You start. What do you want her name to be?
- If we were doctors, what would we have in our office to make children happy?

■ Doing the laundry:

- If these clothes could talk, what do you think they would say?
- What would it be like if animals wore clothes? What would an elephant wear? A zebra? A giraffe? How about a lion?
- What would happen if we wore each other's clothes? If you wore mine, I wore Daddy's, and Grandma wore yours? Whose clothes would you like to wear?
- How could we wash our clothes if we didn't have a washing machine?

■ Riding in a car, bus, subway:

- What are all the other ways we could get to the store?
- If you could drive, where would you go? What would your car look like?
- Let's write a letter. Who should we write to? (The letter could be to anyone, real or imaginary.) What should we say?
- Let's pretend we're driving to the North Pole. What will we find when we get there? (Change the destination and let your child come up with his or her own suggestions.)

■ Waiting for food to cook:

- Let's name all the sweet things we like to eat and put them together to make a pretend dessert. What should we name it?
- How do you think it feels to be a birthday cake? What kind of a cake would you like to be? Whose cake would you be?
- If we could invite everyone we know to lunch, who would come? What do you think they'd like to eat?
- What would our kitchen look like if we lived on the moon?
- Let's name all the foods we can think of that are green (or red, yellow, purple, etc.). I'll name one, then you name one.

■ Waiting at the bank:

- If you had all the money in the world, what would you do with it?
- What would you do if you worked in this bank?
- How could we make this bank really fun for children?

There are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions and no limit to where your language and imaginative adventures might go. The important thing is to have fun together as you encourage your child to think, pretend, and stretch his or her imaginative powers!