

## Play Activity – Store/Shopping



Play is how children learn; They explore, problem solve, and model what they see happening around them daily. Playing store can be done using items from your pantry, play food, grocery bags. You can recycle boxes of pasta, cereal, juice box, small milk/juice jugs. Your store can also be any store your child is familiar with – toy store, Target, bookstore.

When we set up the store in class, we have lots of real-life items that are familiar to the children. We also have plastic fruits, vegetables, egg containers (we will add the plastic eggs used around Easter time), shopping bags, baskets, and occasionally a grocery cart. Some of the children will put items in and out of a basket, some will push a shopping cart by the 'store,' and others will have a purse/bag and a baby doll at the shop. Each child is in their own stage of play. Our goal is to meet them right where they are while observing what they are drawn to and then play right there. Following their lead and imitating their actions, sounds, and following their directions.

1. **Materials Needed:** Play food – plastic, wood, items from your pantry, recycled empty boxes, grocery bags (cloth), baskets. Your store does not have to be a grocery store – it can also be a toy store, a bookstore, or whatever interests your child. You can set up on a coffee table, around a play kitchen if you have one, or near some shelves where your child can grab the items they want.
2. **How to:** This activity can be set up for a week to allow for growth on the play or something you set up for a day and put away to do again at a different time. It is up to you and what works for your child.

**Developmentally this activity encourages:** This type of play reinforces so many skills. You are making a regular real-life activity accessible to your child. They know this – they've ridden in the carts, they have held the fruit snacks. Language is a big one – labeling, counting, and choosing what they want to play with, located in their kitchen. Eye-hand coordination is utilized as they pick items, put them in a bag, basket, heavy work lifting and carrying objects, open lids, and stacking items on shelves. Again, we want to use 1-2 word phrases to help keep the communication clear and straightforward, such as 'Yum, cereal,' "red apples," 'heavy can' 'lift – so heavy.' If there are siblings, this is a great group play activity with each child at their own level.

<https://toddlerapproved.com/2014/06/pretend-play-toy-store-with-lego-bricks.html>