

Teach Real Play Skills

(Without Buying New Toys)



*Start here. Then grab the full eBook when
you're ready.*

Chris & Ana Topham (BCBAs)

If Your Child Walks Away from Toys... You're Not Doing Anything Wrong

If you've ever bought a toy your child completely ignored, you're not alone.

The toy sits there. They walk away.
And you're left wondering, "Am I
doing something wrong?"

The truth?
It's not the toy.
And it's definitely not you.

It just means your child learns
differently — and that's okay.

This eBook will show you one simple
tool to **turn any toy into a chance for
connection**, language, and real
learning — using what you already
have at home.



Our favorite way to teach play

(Without Turning it Into a Lesson)



This 3-step method works with almost any toy — even the ones they seem to ignore.

It's simple. It's natural. And it's designed to meet your child exactly where they are.



Join

Match what they're doing



Add

Add a playful twist



Wait

Pause and let them respond

This kind of play helps your child:

- Stay engaged longer
- Use more language
- Connect and interact more with others



Step 1: **Join** Their Play

(Even if it doesn't look like play right now)

The goal: Build connection and shared attention — **without directing or correcting.**

Why This Works:

For many autistic kids, play is a safe zone — but only if we stop trying to “fix” it.

When you join your child's play exactly as it is, you become predictable, fun, and worth engaging with. That's the foundation for everything: imitation, language, connection.



Try This:

- Sit nearby with no agenda
- Copy what they're doing
- Match their pace and energy
- Smile if they glance at you
- Follow their lead, not your plan





Step 2: **Add One Thing**

(Gently stretch the play — without making it a test)

The goal: **Add one playful moment** — to keep the fun going and spark curiosity.

Why This Works:

Once you've joined their play, adding just one interesting thing makes you part of the fun.

It invites your child to stay engaged, try something new, and maybe even respond in a whole new way.



Try This:

- Add a silly voice or sound: "Beep beep!"
- Knock over a tower, hide a toy
- Offer a choice silently by holding up two pieces
- Comment: "Mine's going soooo slow!"





Step 3: Watch, Wait, and Respond

(This is where progress happens — in the pause)

The goal: **Give your child time to take in what you did** — and then respond to any sign of interest.

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Why This Works:

Many autistic children need extra time to process before they can respond.

Waiting tells your child: “I saw that. I’m here. Let’s keep going.”

This is where you build confidence, motivation, and connection.



Try This:

- After you say or do something, count to 5 silently
- Watch without jumping in
- Mirror their action or build on it
- Stay playing, even if it is slow
- Copy what he did with warmth





How to teach using toys you have

(More examples in our eBook)

We are therapists, and we are parents.

And yes — we have way too many toys in our house.

Like most parents, we've scrolled on Amazon at 10 p.m. wondering, "Maybe this one will finally get him to play differently."

That's not the problem.

Having toys isn't the issue.

The real question is: what do we do with them?



Blocks



Cars



Blocks



Join

Start by sitting next to them without saying anything.

- Stack a block next to theirs

How to Join:

- Place one block on top of another next to theirs.
- Say: “I’m building too.”
- Just smile and make eye contact



Add

Add a silly sound, a new action, or playful moment.

- Don’t direct — make the play fun and keep it going.

What to do:

- Make the blocks fall and say “oh no!”
- Pretend a block is a phone and say “Hello?”
- Make a block fly and say “Wooooosh!”



Wait

Pause after you add something, watch, and react.

- This gives them time to notice, process, and respond.

Look For:

- A quick glance.
- Copying you.
- Laughing or engaging.

THEN respond!

- “You put that one on!”
- “A phone, that’s silly!”
- “I saw you switch blocks!”



Cars



Join

Start by sitting next to them without saying anything.

- Match what your child is already doing with cars.

How to Join:

- If they're spinning wheels, spin yours.
- If they're crashing, crash gently too.
- Drive next to them and copy their sound.



Add

Add one new twist — a sound, a motion, or a surprise.

- Don't direct — make the play fun and keep it going.

What to do:

- Make your car say: "Beep beep!" or "Vroom!"
- Drive your car under their arm: "Tunnel time!"
- Crash into a pillow and laugh: "Boom!"



Wait

Give space. Then celebrate any little response.

- This gives them time to notice, process, and respond.

Look For:

- A quick glance.
- Copying you.
- Crashing a car into yours

THEN respond!

- "You made your car go fast too!"
- "You saw my tunnel trick!"
- "You copied me!"

Make Any Toy A Learning Toy

(Even the Toys They Walk Right Past)



Teach your child real skills using toys you already own — no extra therapy hours, no expensive materials.

By Chris & Ana Topham (BCBAs)

Make Any Toy A Learning Toy

(Complete 30+ Page eBook)

Get How To Make Any Toy a Learning Toy for just \$9

includes real-life examples for over 10 toys, behavior support tips, and a complete Scripts & Tips companion.

Perfect for **toddlers, preschoolers, and early play learners.**



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