Useful websites:

Play Types - Play Scotland
Intensive Interaction - Fundamentals of Communication
Supporting Child Development Through Play: Insights for Parents and Caregivers - Sensory Project

Additional Resources

- This may depend upon your child's own interests and fascinations. For example if they really like trains, having a variety of trains, tracks and small world will support and enhance their play.
- More generally speaking, providing toys that are 'open-ended' are useful as they can be used in a variety of different ways, offering interest, variety and the ability to develop different types of play.
- Some examples of 'open-ended' toys are: wooden blocks, magnetic tiles, kinetic sand, a dolls house, Playdoh, toy animals, art supplies and den building kits.

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PLAY AND INTERACTION

A guide for parents

What is play and interaction?

Put simply, this is the way in which we approach engaging with a child to support their play and social communication skills.

A Little More Information

Dependent upon your child's development, the way in which you play and interact with them can vary considerably. For those children who are at the early stages of interaction and play, just getting used to sharing a space with another person can be a big step. Taking the time to slow down and consider the child's reaction to you sharing their space is important in establishing a relationship of trust and safety. Once a child allows you to share their space take the time to mirror their body language and actions. This may be with toys that they are playing with or it maybe with their sounds and gestures. What we are aiming for in these interactions is to develop a sense of connection and turn taking. If a child is making sounds or banging their hand on a table, we do the same, taking it in turns and encouraging a response.

If possible we try to extend the movement and sound in some way, possibly by adding intonation or a slightly different movement.
For children that have developed their interaction and play skills to a greater extent we need to follow their lead. Play works best when it is freely chosen and intrinsically driven. Therefore, the best play occurs when adults join children in their imaginative worlds rather than setting out a play activity for a child to join them. Taking time to observe a child at play is a useful first step in identifying what sort of play they are engaging in. This will mean that you can more meaningfully engage alongside them and not disrupt the play that is naturally taking place. Your role in play is to support it and to facilitate it. What can you add to the play to enhance it? What questions or stimulus could you add to take play to the next stage that will allow for more collaboration, imagination and problem solving?

Ways to support at home

Create an environment where play can naturally occur. Is there space? Is it inviting? Does it have toys or objects that are exciting to your child?
Tune into your child and reflect upon what developmental stage your child is currently working in. Do they need you to build the very basics of turn taking in sounds and gestures? Do they enjoy cause and effect play experiences? Are they engaging readily in play, building structures or acting out scenarios based on their own lives?
Consider what your child loves the most and offer more of that kind of experience. Make the time in your day to commit to uninterrupted, quality time with your child where you let them take the lead. Join them in the play, be silly, engage and have fun!