



## MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY STRETCHES ACROSS THE ELOF DOMAINS

The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework (ELOF) provides language to help teachers, family child care providers, and home visitors understand child development and what children should know and be able to do to succeed in school. The ELOF helps staff implement effective program and teaching practices\* that promote strong outcomes for all children, including children with disabilities or suspected delays and children who are dual language learners or tribal language learners.

Make-believe play supports children’s skills in multiple ELOF domains, including Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, and Cognition. Children are born ready to explore and imagine as they learn about the world. To make-believe during play, children need the skills to imitate sounds and behaviors, understand that objects or symbols represent something else, and develop positive relationships with their peers.

### FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Children’s creativity in play—using familiar objects in new ways and showing imagination—is primarily found in the **Approaches to Learning** domain under the sub-domain Creativity.
- When infants and toddlers begin to engage in reciprocal play (passing a ball back and forth), imitating peers or adults, or using one object to stand for another object (using a block to represent a phone), they are demonstrating skills in the **Cognition** domain, sub-domain Imitation and Symbolic Representation and Play.”



### FOR PRESCHOOLERS

- Children use their growing language and literacy skills in make-believe play as they hold and maintain conversations with their peers. For example, they might “read” from a menu while playing in a pretend restaurant. These skills are in the **Language and Literacy** domain.
- When children engage in positive interactions and cooperative play, they demonstrate skills in the **Social and Emotional Development** domain, sub-domain Relationships with Other Children. These skills are all in the **Language and Literacy** domain, sub-domain Language and Communication and Print and Alphabet Knowledge.



### FOR DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Using children’s home language during make-believe play is an important part of connecting make-believe play to their family, culture, and developmental goals. For example, you can support children’s sense of identity and belonging (**Social and Emotional Development**) by incorporating key words or phrases in the child’s home language during make-believe play. This helps them make connections between play and their home language. Talking with families about acceptable make-believe themes, dress-up attire, or behaviors can help you meet the children’s needs while being culturally considerate.

\*For Home Visitors- Teaching practices mean providing effective and engaging learning experiences and interactions with children that support important learning outcomes.