

# 6 points to remember

## 1. Identifying schemas

Schematic play is play that children are compelled to do. Look at your child when they are playing, where they are fully involved and absorbed. Then really observe it, and try to work out what exactly is it that they find so fascinating. For example, a boy is mixing paint – is it the swirling round in circles that he likes (rotational), or is he enclosing the whole picture with a box right around the outside of the paper (enclosure)? It could be that he loves painting over the whole picture (enveloping).

## 2. Finding patterns in your child's play

Once you think you have identified a pattern in your child's play, the next thing to do is to start looking for more examples of it in other areas of play.

Schematic play is most likely to show all areas of children's play, so there may be evidence in a variety of different activities.

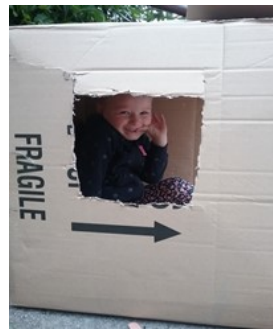
For example your child may be interested in putting things in bags and boxes and taking them from place to place. They may also like pushing wheelbarrows or prams. This is called a transporting schema.

## 3. Extend their learning

Schematic play usually indicates deep-level learning, because the children have high levels of involvement and are usually strongly motivated to explore.

Providing toys and activities that help your child to fully explore their schemas can really support their learning.

For example, providing prams, bags, backpacks and diggers, etc. for children who like to 'transport' and fabrics, or masking tape and wrapping paper for children who like to 'envelop'.



## 4. Supporting your child's schematic play with other children

Providing a variety of open-ended activities and experiences can inspire a group of children with different schemas. Interlocking train tracks, for example, are good for children with a connection schema (joining things together), a rotation schema (watching the train wheels go around) and a transporting schema (putting things in the train carriages and pushing them around the track).

## 5. Keeping safe

If a child is exploring a trajectory schema, this will involve a fascination for items in motion, specifically from one place to another.

This is great when the objects are moving down a ramp, or a football is being kicked outside. If your child is throwing toys across the room this may be dangerous. Alternatively you can meet the needs of your child by providing safer alternatives, such as chiffon scarves or beanbags for throwing into containers.

## 6. Unique children

Not all children will exhibit schematic play. However some children may investigate many different schemas over a short period of time, whilst others may investigate a single schema for a while longer. If you have concerns about your child repeating a single schema, you can start to introduce alternative schema that builds on his/her interests. For example, a rotational schema could be moved on from simple spinning to include up and down motion, using a yo-yo or cars going down a ramp.



**Strong Close Nursery  
School**

# Schematic play & your child

**A helpful peek into your child's learning & development**





# What are Schemas?

Schemas are repeatable actions that children make in their play. For example putting things inside things or throwing things. As children get older you may see the same actions in their mark making and constructions for example drawing circles or throwing balls.

There are many schemas and once you know more about them you will start to see them everywhere!

Recognizing a schema will help you understand what your child is doing and interested which will help you to extend their interests further – for example a child who likes putting things inside things may like boxes with lids and handbags. A child who likes throwing things may like balls and throwing pebbles into streams.

## What are the different types of schemas?

### Transporting

Carrying objects in bags, prams, and trucks or simply carrying things from one place to another.

### Enveloping

Wrapping toys in paper or sticky tape, wrapping themselves in fabric, dressing up, or hiding in a large box.

### Orientation

Hanging upside down, hiding under the table, standing on top of the chair.

### Trajectory

Throwing, dropping actions are all part of the Trajectory schema. Some other Trajectory actions are things like climbing up and jumping off (Trajectory of one's own body)

### Positioning

Organizing, lining up, and putting things on top of each other (Building blocks, Lego, Boxes etc.)

### Connection

Joining train tracks, clicking together pieces of Lego, running a string from one thing to another... the urge of Connection.

### Rotational

Spinning on the spot, objects that rotate, such as windmills and wheels; drawing circles.

### Transformation

Holding all your food in your mouth for a long time to see what it turns into, mixing your juice with your fish pie, water with dirt, or helping with mixing the bread dough.

### Containing

Putting things into boxes, enclosing animals in a small world model, drawing boxes around pictures, hiding in dens.

