



Dramatic Play Area Ideas

Whether you are lucky enough to have a large classroom or a small family daycare space ... having an area for dramatic play is one of the essentials in an early childhood environment. During dramatic play children build self-esteem ... develop social relationships ... and learn about the world around them. The ideas that follow came from the wonderful women on my yahoo email lists [childcareland2](#) and [shelleylovettsprintables](#).

Some of our favorite dramatic center ideas are:

Grocery Store - We have lots of play food ... empty household containers such as laundry soap .. milk cartons etc ... shopping baskets ... a shopping cart ... paper shopping bags ... cash registers and play money. Children can take turns being shoppers and check out clerks.

Post Office - We have mailboxes that are made out of large boxes and an area for children to write letters. They put them into envelopes and put stickers on for the stamps.

Movie Theater - We made a movie screen from a white sheet and put chairs in front of it. A light was shined behind the sheet and a couple of children would dance ... tell stories so the children in front of the sheet could see their shadows.

Camping - We put up a small tent and had outdoor cooking utensils. We also built a campfire area out of rocks and small sticks. We had flash lights as well as stuffed animals.

Ice Cream Store - We used empty ice cream buckets ... ice cream scoops ... play ice cream and ice cream cones ... dishes ... cash registers ... play money We also made up a menu of flavors were in the ice cream store.

Shelley Lovett
childcareland.com

I did Kentucky chicken ...Pizza hut ..Subway ..you can find kits at Walmart for these that are way cool now ..but I bult my own ...Beauty Shop is a fun one ..baby sitting service ...watch out they love to act like you ..LOL

Marie

I don't have a name for this.....but some kids are trees and they have to stay in one spot and sway to the music....but their branches can't touch anyone....then the other kids are whatever jungle animal you call and they "monkey" around the trees...but can't touch the trees...then they switch places.....I liked this one for helping some of those kids with self control...we do it to music

TRICIA

Animal Shelter

I have stuffed dogs and cats that we have small crates for. The kids take their pets to the vet for illness and check-ups - lots of interacting and make believe. Lots of love, kindness and affection too.

Beauty Shop

We use the wash-off nail polish, face paint, spray color for hair and sponge curlers...the kids adore this one.

Majority Rules

Now that the kids are all older - 2.5, 3.5, 4, 5, 6 we do majority rule for activities that we need to unite on. We have a hat and I have colored 3 x 5 cards - red is no, green is yes. The kids drop a card in the hat and we tally the votes. This has been taken to extremes - like who sits where at the table, whether to go on a walk or play in the yard, which video, etc. It is cute to see them working together.

Barber Shop

The kids LOVE playing with shaving cream. We squirt it on the table and they usually end up covering themselves with it, but they sure smell good when we are done! We use a standard kitchen spoon as the razor.

Babs

Library in the reading corner: library cards, lots of books, book bags, a "quiet" sign, etc.

Grocery Store: food, play staple items (soap, toothpaste, etc) shopping cart, cash register, play money etc.

A cardboard Box ideas: The ideas are endless with a cardboard box: a house, a fort, a store of some sort, just about any bldg that you might find in your community such as Walmart or fast food, or hardware store. etc.

Connect more than one together for a larger house, or connect small ones between big ones for a tunnel from one to the other. We even added sunroofs in some boxes one time - helped also to

keep the younger ones from getting scared in the darker "room."

Movie Theatre: Set up chairs in front of the TV, showed a Disney movie, had tickets, popcorn buckets (empty - we worked on pretending), etc

Post Office: envelopes, paper, pen, papers, stamps (stickers), mail man outfit if possible (bag and hat, etc), a Mail box (out of a cardboard box), etc.

Pet Shop: stuffed animals, cardboard boxes put together to represent cages, containers of pet food (empty of course), pet grooming items, pet toys, cash register, play money, books abt pets,

Shoe Store: variety of used shoes - all sizes, cash register, play money, cardboard boxes to "display" the shoes, a chair to sit to try the shoes on.

Hospital: bandages, bandaids, masks, scrubs, cots, first aid kit, stethoscope, dolls.

Colleen

My children LOVE to play restaurant! We set a table out next to our play kitchen and they choose who's going to be the cook, waiter, and customers. I have aprons for the waiters and dress shirts for the cooks. They have a great time bringing out the play food and serving to each other.

Anna-Marie

We do a bear cave as well and have hibernation time. I have made a brown enclosure that fits over our folding table and has an area that opens and clips back for an entrance to the cave. They then can be bears and hibernate inside. We do this during the winter months and they take the teddybears in with them to hibernate as well.

Marcia

My girls that I take care of LOVE to play beauty shop. I have an old hair dryer and curling iron that I cut the cords off of. I have a cap, sponge rollers, large clips, empty shampoo bottles and pretend make-up and nail polish. They do make overs every day!

Tami

We made an iceberg in winter when we did winter animals. I used a large white blanket for the base of the iceberg and then covered several large, hollow blocks in white roll paper for the smaller icebergs. The kids would then make different animal stick puppets to use and also used small baby receiving blankets to make forts and hidy-holes in the iceberg. Of course, we added winter coats, hats, gloves, mittens, etc... to our dress up box so that could dress the part as well! This was always one of their favorite units. Sometimes we would make sleds out of old cardboard boxes for dog-sleds, too. It's a pretty easy scene to make and sparks the little ones imaginations!!!!

Heather Rummel

Preschool Teacher

Huntsville, Alabama

I create dramatic play areas that go with our theme. Currently we are talking about flowers/gardens etc. so dramatic play is a florist shop/garden shop. We have balance scales to weigh toy veggies and fruit, a cash register, toy money, calculator, order pad, pencil, lots of artificial flowers (parents donate these), ribbon, vases, foam bricks for the children to make floral arrangements (be sure your digital camera is near by to take pictures of their arrangements for thier portfolios and thier parents); basket of toy

fruits and veggies, gardening gloves, packets of seeds (I scan real seed packets, print, fold into packets and laminate so they can be used year after year), straw gardening hats, overalls, boots, etc.

Rita
Mother's Touch FCC

I took one of those wooden shelves and removed the shelves from it leaving it empty. I then hung a tension curtain rod and that's where we hang up our dress up clothes!

Michelle
Wee care Child Care

The best dramatic area I ever did was with Fairy Tales- I had costumes and props for 3 little pigs, 3 bears, red riding hood, gingerbreadman, and a few others. The children acted out the stories and then did their own stories. I changed the area to a pizza parlor (which is always a hit) a few weeks later and the children upset.

Cathy

In our daycare we have a dress up station, doll house, baby care, and kitchen/cook center in our dramatic play area. The possibilities are endless.

We also have a car rug and animals which they incorporate into their play a lot.

Tanya
Krafty Kids Daycare
New York

The best ideas I can think of for this area are to set up prop boxes for different themes. Such as menu's, clipboards, aprons, play food, for a restaurant theme, the white paper apple bags, play fruit, a cash register, play money, a balance scale for a fruit stand, a paper mask, empty toothpaste dispensers, mirrors, magazines, clipboards, pencils, old toothbrushes, a white t-shirt cut down the middle for a dentist jacket. These items can be collected as you think about it or go to different places and then be added to your prop boxes. These prop boxes can then be rotated in and out of your dramatic play area for new interest. Garage sales and Goodwill are good places to look for old dance costumes to buy to add to a costume prop box for Halloween.

Sara K

With my pre-tods, I use kitchen play to teach colors. We "cook" red apples, yellow bananas, et. I try to use familiar foods, and dwell on color naming.

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