

Invent and Build a Machine

What will your machine do?

What could you use to make it?

Maybe you could build a machine that helps you put on socks?

Or what about a machine that can transport food?



Play spark

There are already lots of inventions but you could come up with something new! Draw your machine or gather up a mix of resources and recycling to build it.



You might notice...

Watch how children play, who they play with and how they solve problems. Does this change as the machine develops? Are you surprised by any of the children's interactions?



Top tips

Sometimes children will need or ask for help – respond when they need you. Before offering suggestions, consider how you can encourage children to solve problems for themselves.



What's next...

Once built, the machine may spark dramatic or fantasy play, attracting different children. You could provide props or costumes to support the play.



Play types

Creative play, mastery play, object play, dramatic play, role play, fantasy play and imaginative play.

Bull's-eye!

Practice your aiming skills!

You could draw target boards and hang them up.

You could build a tall tower to knock down.
Make it out of recycling materials, loose parts or toys.

How far away can you hit your target from?



Play spark

Building up and knocking down are equally important for children. Both offer a lot of joy and satisfaction.



You might notice...

Children's skills develop as they repeatedly build and take aim. Watch out for rules developing and changing.



Top tips

This challenge gives children permission to explore an interest in things falling down or over. This may be a lot of fun, release frustration or be an exploration of cause and effect. If necessary, involve children in choosing a safe area for this play and discussing any rules.



What's next...

If your aim is really good, try taking a few steps back from the target. Try the same activity with different objects.



Play types

Creative play, exploratory play, mastery play, object play, communication play, locomotor play.

Shadow Play

What is the most intriguing shadow you can see around you?

Can you make an interesting shadow?

Does your shadow move quickly?

Can you catch it?



Play spark

Shadow tig is a great game to play when it's sunny and you don't need any resources. Some objects cast shadows that have unexpected shapes. What do they look like? Can you trace them?



You might notice...

Children's curiosity about what's around them and how they interact in new ways.



Top tips

Adults can have fun with this too! You can make shadows or show objects that have interesting shadows.



What's next...

If children enjoy this challenge, you could put on a shadow puppet show. You can use your body or make puppets out of cardboard and paper to create your shadows. Build your shadow theatre by setting up a sheet in front of a light source and you will be good to go.



Play types

Creative play, exploratory play, mastery play, object play, communication play, dramatic play, role play, social play, locomotor play, fantasy and imaginative play.

Go on an Adventure

Your imagination can take you anywhere!

Where will you travel today?

Is it warm? Is it cold?

What might you need to take with you?



Play spark

Start your adventure on a magic carpet. Find a rug or sheet to spread on the ground. All aboard! The carpet can take you to many magical places. What do you see? Who do you meet?



You might notice...

Stories developing collaboratively. Working together requires children to listen to others, adapt and negotiate – all great social skills.



Top tips

Children often return to the carpet after a period of playing away. Don't be too quick to tidy up. With time to develop, the play and stories become richer.



What's next...

Try putting on some music or changing the lighting. Gather some props that could be used to develop a story and leave them for children to find.



Play types

Creative play, exploratory play, mastery play, object play, communication play, dramatic play, role play, social play, locomotor play, fantasy and imaginative play, symbolic play.

Try Not to Tumble!

Do you accept this challenge?

Winner is the last one standing – not the one falling over in giggles!

Set your own rules and let the contest begin!



Play spark

Set up a contest – you could duel with pillows or make an opponent out of cardboard to knock down.



You might notice...

Watch out for children's awareness of others. Do they play differently with different children?



Top tips

Rough and tumble play develops emotional and social skills. Less adult intervention enables children to develop judgement and social skills. Involve children in discussing and setting any boundaries.



What's next...

Rough and tumble play is often discouraged in organised play spaces but has lots of benefits for children. Can you find a way to allow this important play type in your setting?



Play types

Creative play, mastery play, object play, communication play, dramatic play, role play, social play, rough and tumble play, locomotor play, fantasy and imaginative play, recapitulative play, symbolic play.