

Pointers For Parents

Planning A Perfect Play Date

Tips To Help Parents Prevent Play Date Pitfalls

(NAPSA)—It's an entry-level mixer for tots and a get-together for parents: A play date can be an excellent social setting for young children, providing important child-to-child interaction. Play dates help youngsters build upon critical social and developmental skills, while giving moms and dads the chance to socialize (that is, while supervising the kids, of course).

To make the most of every play date and to prevent potential pitfalls, seasoned child care expert Nanny Deb, from FOX's "Nanny 911," offers tips on planning the perfect play date:

- **Time Is of the Essence**—Choose an appropriate time to host the play date. Early morning and post-afternoon nap times work best. Well-rested children are most likely to play well with others, so make sure everyone has had adequate sleep. Limiting the play date to two or three hours of play will also help ward off overly tired and cranky dispositions.

- **Let Kids Have Some of the Control**—Allow your children to be involved in who gets invited. But be sure not to leave anyone out!

- **Include Other Parents**—It's important to ensure that all kids feel comfortable, especially when they are in unfamiliar terri-



Planning stimulating activities can help create a perfect play date.

tory. When their parents are on the scene, children will feel empowered to engage in social activity.

- **Plan Stimulating Activities**—Children are more likely to be on good behavior when they are preoccupied with thought-provoking play. Play-date-appropriate products, such as the Little Mommy™ Play All Day™ Toddler Doll, allow children ages 3 to 6 to develop their nurturing skills. The toddler doll can say more than 30 phrases, move her arms and sing to mimic key moments in a toddler's life. In addition, there is a Little Mommy™ Play All Day™ Activity Center with special places for nap time, snack time, potty

time and playtime.

Perhaps best of all, when girls combine the Play All Day™ Toddler Doll and the Play All Day™ Activity Center, even more fun surprises will unfold.

- **Encourage Sharing**—Ask all kids to bring along a favorite toy to introduce to others. This will dissuade competitive attention from being placed on the host child's favorite toy.

- **"I Want Doesn't Get"**—Do not give in to temper tantrums over toy tugs-of-war. Give kids several minutes to try to solve the tiff on their own before stepping in and having both kids move to another activity.

- **Avoid Sugary Snacks**—Snacks you provide should be parent approved. Keep a checklist of anyone who has an allergy to certain foods. Avoid foods with too much sugar, including cookies and candy. Serving snacks such as fruits and veggies are usually a safe bet to maintain smiles throughout the play date.

Play dates are great ways to provide healthy interaction among children. Parents can make the most of these fun-filled hours by implementing Nanny Deb's tips and incorporating toys that provide positive and meaningful play experiences for children.