



How to use your **UPLAY™** MAT.



“Hi. I’m Dr. Jen. I am a mom of four children and a pediatrician. I am so happy you have decided to Play This Way Everyday with us!”

This book provides step-by-step instructions for ten exercises using your U-PLAY MAT and cards. For each exercise, the innovative design allows for the child to sit inside the “U” shape, directly across from the caregiver. This promotes excellent opportunities for **P L A Y** (keep reading!). Try and set aside some time each day to use your U-PLAY MAT in a place that has limited distractions. Work through these exercises over time and utilize additional card sets as your child progresses.

The U-PLAY MAT was designed by a pediatrician in consultation with a speech therapist. All Play This Way Everyday products are designed to enhance learning and development for children of all abilities, and are not intended to be a substitute for any therapeutic service.

Please visit us at www.playthisway.com to learn more or just say hello!

Enjoy your children,

Dr. Jennifer Canter

Founder and Creator
Play This Way Everyday LLC

Dr. Jen's Tips for **P L A Y** with your U-PLAY MAT:

Praise

Children thrive on caregiver praise! Provide your child with encouragement while using your U-PLAY MAT to keep her motivated and excited. **Example – “Good Work!”, “Nice Job!”, “I like the way you are trying!”**

Look Around

The shape of the U-PLAY MAT and the ability to rotate the cards between the fifteen holders will naturally encourage a heightened awareness of surroundings. By having the card holders in front and on both sides, your child will automatically begin to search around.

Active Expressions

Use the U-PLAY MAT activities to model and reinforce appropriate eye contact, facial expressions and overall social interaction. While interacting with a child, encourage her to establish and maintain eye contact.

Your Time

Try and set aside some time each day, no matter how long, to sit on the floor and have structured, focused play with your child. This should be special time that you and your child look forward to with one-on-one attention and interaction.

EXERCISE 1: What Things Are (With A Hint 😊)

1. Place one set of cards inside the pockets of the U-PLAY MAT. You may want to start with only 2 – 3 cards on the mat and eventually work your way up to using the full set.
2. Ask her to “find” or “touch” the targeted word. **Example – “Touch the dog”, “Find the pants”, etc.**
3. Praise her for correct answers.
4. If she does not respond, or responds incorrectly, repeat the question and patiently give her time to process the request.
5. If she is still unable to provide a correct response, you can model the appropriate response. **Example – “Look at the dog! Here it is!”**
6. After identifying the target image, ask her to find it for you. **Example – “Ok, your turn, show me the dog.”**



“This is called **IDENTIFICATION**. This exercise works on receptive vocabulary.”

EXERCISE 2: What Things Are (Without A Hint)

1. Start with all of the U-PLAY MAT pockets empty.
2. Hold up one card. Ask him to tell you what it is. **Example – “What is this?”, “What do you see?”**
3. Praise him for correct responses.
4. If he does not respond, or responds incorrectly, repeat the question and give him time to process the request.
5. If he is still unable to provide a correct response you can model the appropriate response. **Example – “It’s a dog.”, “Dog, you say dog.”**
6. Once he correctly identifies the card, place it in a pocket on the U-PLAY MAT and hold up another card.



“This is called **LABELING**. This exercise works on expressive vocabulary.”

EXERCISE 3: Matching

1. Place one set of cards in the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT. The caregiver keeps the matching set.
2. Hold up one of your cards and ask her to find the match. **Example – “Show me the match”, “Find the card like this one.”**
3. When she identifies the matching card she can place the caregiver's card on top of the one already on the U-PLAY MAT.
4. If she is unable to find the corresponding card, help her by pointing it out and explaining why they match. **Example – “Look, yellow banana and yellow banana. A match!”**
5. After helping her, ask her again to find the match. It is important to allow her to succeed to help build confidence.



“Developing matching skills works towards understanding same/different.”

EXERCISE 4: Same

1. Place two matching cards in the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT. **Example – Dog and dog.**
2. Ask him if they are the same. **Example – “Are these the same?”**
3. If he responds 'yes' praise him for a correct response. You may want to reinforce why they are the same to ensure understanding. **Example – “Yes, these are the same. They are both dogs! Look dog and dog!”**
4. If the child does not respond, or responds incorrectly, provide him with the correct response, then ask him again.
5. For a variation of this activity, use cards that require a 'no' response. For example, if using dog and bird, ask the child if they are the same. **Example – “Are these the same?”**
6. If the child responds 'no' (correct) praise him for a correct response and explain why he is correct. **Example – “You're right! Dog and bird are not the same. They are different!”**
7. If the child does not respond, or responds incorrectly, provide him with the correct response, then ask again.

EXERCISE 5: Different

1. Place two cards that do not match in the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT and ask her if they are different. **Example – “Are these different?”**
2. If she responds 'yes' praise her for a correct response. You may want to reinforce why they are different to ensure understanding. **Example – “You are right! A dog and a cat are different! Good job!”**
3. If she does not respond, or responds incorrectly, provide her with the correct response, then ask her again.
4. For a variation of this activity, use cards that require a 'no' response. For instance, if using dog and dog, ask her if they are different. **Example – “Are these different?”**
5. If she responds 'no', praise her for a correct response and explain why she is right. **Example – “You're right! Dog and dog are not different. They are the same!”**
6. If the child does not respond or responds incorrectly provide her with the correct response, then ask again.



“Understanding same and different builds the skills to identify letters, a foundation for reading.”

EXERCISE 6: Yes/No

1. Start with the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT empty.
2. Hold up a card and ask him a question that requires a Yes/No response.
Example – “Do you want the dog?”, “Is this an apple?”
3. If he responds appropriately, provide positive reinforcement by giving him the card.
4. If he does not respond, or responds incorrectly, repeat the question and give him time to process the request.
5. If he is still unable to provide a correct response, you can model the appropriate response. **Example – “Yes! It’s a dog.”, “No, this is not an apple.”**
6. After modeling the appropriate response, ask him the question again, giving him the opportunity to respond correctly before giving him the card.
7. After a correct response, the card can be placed in a pocket in the mat and another card may be used.

EXERCISE 7: ‘Wh’ Questions (Who, What, Where, When, Why?)

1. Start with the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT empty. Hold up a card and ask the child a ‘wh’ question. **Example – “What color is it?”**
2. If she responds appropriately, provide positive reinforcement by giving her the card.
3. If she does not respond, or responds incorrectly, repeat the question and give her time to process the request.
4. Help her to expand her responses by providing her with models and have her imitate you. **Example – “The apple is red. Can you say, ‘The apple is red?’ ”**
5. To make the task more difficult as a question, you would not show her the image until the question is answered. **Example – “What color is an apple?” When the child answers ‘red’, the caregiver can show her the card to reinforce the correct answer.**
6. Begin with simple what questions, and work towards more complex question forms, such as why questions. **Examples – “What color is it?”, “What do you wear on your head?”, Who do you play with?”, “Where do you play?”, “When do you eat dinner?”, “Why do you go to the playground?”**



“These skills begin the foundation of conversation.”

EXERCISE 8: Using More Words!

Once he is able to label and identify target words with ease, you can begin to work on expanding his word usage!

1. Place one set of cards in the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT. The caregiver keeps the matching set.
2. Have him request the card he wants. (The cards on the mat will serve as a visual cue.)
3. Initially, provide models for him to imitate to help him request the desired card. Try to vary the phrases you use to avoid the use of rote phrases. **Example – "Dog", "More dog", "Want more dog", "I want more dog"**
4. Initially start with a one word request and when he is ready, use more words.
5. Eventually, begin to phase out the model and provide him with a verbal or visual cue, until he is able to request independently.
6. After he appropriately requests, you can give him the card and have him place it on top of the corresponding card on the U-PLAY MAT.



"This works on increasing **MEAN LENGTH UTTERANCE (MLU)**. Increasing MLU will improve communication and conversation skills."

EXERCISE 9: Making Connections

1. Start with two different card sets. **Example – U-Animals, U-Food**
2. Place five cards from each set in the pockets on the U-PLAY MAT (mix them up).
3. Receptive Language Task - Ask her to identify cards from one category. **Example – "Find all of the animals.", "Find all of the food."**
4. If she is unable to do this, go through each card explaining why it does, or does not, belong in the target category.
5. Once you further explain the activity, give her a chance to try again.
6. Expressive Language Task – Have her tell you what the images have in common. **Example – "How are they the same?" – "They all have wheels."**
7. If she is not able to express what the pictures have in common, help her by giving a hint. **Example – (Animals) "Look at all of these pictures. They live on the farm, in the zoo and the jungle. What are they?", "These are all different _____."**



"This is called **CATEGORIZATION** and **CLASSIFICATION**. This skill helps a child make connections and recall information."

EXERCISE 10: Following Directions

'Clean up time' is a great time to work on following directions.

1. Begin with simple one step directions. **Example** – **“Pick up cards.”**
2. When he is ready, begin to use more specific directives. **Example** – **“Pick up truck.”, “Pick up car.”**
3. Once simple one step directions have been mastered, increase the demands you place on him by making the directions more complex. **Example** – **“Pick up the apple and the banana and give them to me.”**
4. If at any time he is having difficulty following directions, model the target behavior. **Example** – **“Look at me. I can pick up the apple and the banana.”**

Note: For children that have lots of energy and a difficult time focusing, you may want to incorporate directives that require a motor response.

Example – **“Jump up and down, then pick up a card.”, “Clap your hands, then give me the dog.”, “Pick up the food, then give mommy a hug.”**



“This helps a child develop the skills to process information. It also helps the grownup with cleaning up!”

U-Play Card Pack Expansion Topics

Whenever you use the U-PLAY MAT and card packs think of ways that you can expand on the activities by engaging your child in conversation. Here are some examples using all of the available U-PLAY MAT card packs.



U-Animals

1. What types of animals do you see in your neighborhood?
2. Where do different animals live? **Example** – **zoo, farm, jungle, ocean**
3. What sounds do animals make?
4. Discuss the sizes and colors of different animals.



U-Food

1. What meals do we eat throughout the day?
2. Where are all the different places we eat? **Example** – **home, restaurant, picnic**
3. Discuss healthy foods vs. unhealthy foods. **Example** – **apple vs. candy**
4. What are the different tastes and textures of foods? **Example** – **sweet, salty, mushy**



U-Play

1. Where do we play with different toys? **Example – school, home, yard**
2. Who do you play with? **Example – mommy, daddy, sibling, friend**
3. Ask your child what his favorite toy is, and why.
4. Talk about what each toy does, or how you play with it. **Example – “The plane flies.”, “I hug the doll.”**



U-Fruits and Vegetables

1. Discuss how these foods are healthy and good for you. **Example – “These foods help you build strong bones and are good for your teeth.”**
2. While discussing healthy foods talk about going to the doctor/dentist.
3. What shapes, colors, sizes, and textures do fruits and veggies come in? **Example – “The carrots are long and orange. The apple is round and red.”**



U-Home

1. Talk about what each thing does, or what you use it for. (Object Function)
Example – “We sleep on the bed.”, “We sit on the chair.”
2. What part of the home does this object belong in? **Example – bedroom, kitchen, bathroom**
3. Discuss what you do in each room. **Example – “We eat in the kitchen.”, “We take a shower in the bathroom.”**



U-Go

1. Where do each of the objects belong. **Example – “The train goes on the tracks.”, “The plane goes in the sky.”**
2. Use the fire truck card to talk about fire safety, firefighters and the fire house.
3. Use the tractor card to facilitate language about farms and growing food.
4. Use the bus to discuss going to school and meeting her teacher/friends.



U-Dress

1. Who wears different articles of clothing? **Example – “Daddy wears a tie to work.”**
2. Discuss where you wear certain things. **Example – “We wear a bathing suit to the beach.”, “We wear a backpack to school.”**
3. What body part does the items go on? **Example – “Socks go on our feet.”**
4. Talk about the weather, and how it effects what we wear. **Example – “When it rains we need an umbrella.”**



U-Outside

1. Talk about nature and all of the things you see outside. **Example – “Flowers grow outside. They need sun and water to grow.”**
2. What do we do outside? **Example – “When we are outside we can run, play, and go to the park.”**
3. Where are all of the different places we can go outside. **Example – “We can go to the beach or we can go camping.”**
4. Talk about all the physical activities that are played outside.



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