

# What is a schema?

A schema is a thread of thought which is demonstrated by repeated actions and patterns in children's play or art. Children often repeat actions over and over, testing something out and thereby learning about their world. By repeating things again - whether it is dropping objects from a table, or singing a song again and again - they are exploring ideas. They also explore them through talking, drawing, and constructing of these themes, seeking to find a pattern and building cognitive structures in their brains. Such repeating patterns in children's play are called schemas.



## Connecting

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Joining train tracks, clicking Lego blocks together, tying things together.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

"Everything is tied up in knots and tangled!"

### *Activities to support the schema*

Thread beads, make paper chains, junk construction, build tracks or roads, do some carpentry, connect up some electronic circuits, make a puzzle, make a human train by holding hands.



## Disconnecting/ deconstructing and scattering

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Knocking towers down (dynamic disconnecting), dismantling (a more thorough and thoughtful deconstruction). Cutting with scissors, cutting clay or playdough into small pieces. Smashing ice or sand castles. Scattering or tipping out items.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

"Can't find anything, it's always hidden away in random holes and drawers!"

### *Activities to support the schema*

Pull apart Lego or Mobilo pieces, get child to help with putting away toys like train tracks, dismantle a jigsaw puzzle, disassemble an old piece of equipment (e.g., telephone), break butter into flour during baking, saw pieces of wood during carpentry, knock down sand castles, smash ice, play in a ball pool.



## Trajectory/dynamic vertical/ dynamic horizontal motion

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Pushing, kicking, dropping objects. Throwing things. Running back and forth, or jumping up and down.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

"She's constantly throwing things!" "He keeps jumping off the furniture!"

### *Activities to support the schema*

Make paper airplanes, throw wet sponges/balls/bean bags at a target, use yo-yos, blow feathers, chiffon scarves or tissue paper, chase and catch bubbles, spin and twirl ribbons, make a pulley system, fly a kite, make baking soda and vinegar rockets, play with running water, make art by dripping paint onto paper, play on swings and slides, blow bubbles, launch cars off ramps, play with balloons.



## Rotation and Circularity

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Spinning and twisting, rolling themselves or objects. A fascination with wheels and other rotating objects.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

"He's constantly turning the taps on and off and fiddling with the knobs on the stereo!"

### *Activities to support the schema*

Make paper airplanes, throw wet sponges/balls/bean bags at a target, use yo-yos, blow feathers, chiffon scarves or tissue paper, chase and catch bubbles, spin and twirl ribbons, make a pulley system, fly a kite, make baking soda and vinegar rockets, play with running water, make art by dripping paint onto paper, play on swings and slides, blow bubbles, launch cars off ramps, play with balloons.

“

*Schemas was such a highlight for me, I learnt my child is not being 'naughty' they have a schema which is an urge and they are learning it made me look at it in a different way and now I can come up with ideas to help support.*



## Transporting

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Picking things up, moving them, dumping them down, using prams or baskets, wheelbarrows, bags to move things around.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“Nothing is ever where it belongs!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Use diggers, tractors, wheelbarrows in the garden and sandpit to transport sand, bark, pebbles, other natural objects, treasure hunt with a bucket to collect things, provide a collection of bags and purses, let them help with setting out equipment, watering plants (transporting water).



## Enclosing (2D), Enveloping (3D), Containing

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Surrounding or covering things completely. Getting into boxes or hiding. Burying things. Building fences or walls around objects. Drawing borders around their artwork. Filling containers or putting one thing in another.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“He destroys everything!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Create a den or fort, bring large cardboard boxes to hide in, set up tunnels, play parachute games, use shoe boxes to create homes for small toys, create burrows and tunnels in wet sand and playdough, have bandages and scarves for wrapping, wrap presents or items for pass the parcel, face paint, play peek a boo, provide lots of containers, bury treasure, swing on a barrel swing.



## Going through or around a boundary

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Posting things, exploring holes, tunnels and doors, putting fingers in holes.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“She keeps poking things and making holes!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Threading activities, pouring water or sand through spouts, funnels, colander and sieve, sewing.



## Ordering/positioning

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Lining things up, arranging and ordering things according to a pattern, categorising things.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“He gets so upset if things are not exactly in order!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Provide lots of objects for sorting, collage material for gluing, toy cars, blocks, fairy gardens.



## Orientation/perspective

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Hanging upside down, laying down on the floor to look up at something, climbing up to get a better look, looking through things.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“She’s always moving and won’t sit still!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Provide climbing frames or bars, opportunities to roll, tumble, climb, twist, spin, try to do hand/headstands, make peep holes in boxes, look at mirrors, and through microscopes, binoculars, kaleidoscopes.



## Transforming

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Mixing things, paint and colour mixing, painting self.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“He destroys everything!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Cooking and baking, making potions, melting ice, putting on costumes, masks and wigs, dressing and undressing dolls, painting dolls then bathing them, planting seeds and watching the plants grow.



## Sound

### *Behaviours children may engage in*

Banging, shaking, jiggling, rattling objects, singing.

### *How parents might perceive it?*

“He is making so much noise!”

### *Activities to support the schema*

Waiata, waiata-a-ringā, poi, nature sounds, nature sound walks, make rainsticks, tītī tōrea.