

Construction Area Commentary

Sentence Starters

Notice:

“You’ve chosen to use...”
“That piece is balancing on...”
“You’re carefully placing...”

Describe:

“That’s a strong, sturdy base.”
“These blocks are stacked evenly.”
“You’ve made a tall, narrow structure.”
“That part looks like it’s supporting the top.”
“I can see a repeating pattern here.”

Stretch:

“You’re building up—what might happen if you build outwards?”
“That looks stable... I wonder how you could make it even stronger?”

Descriptive Vocabulary for construction play

Building & Materials:

stacked
slotted
clicked
joined
connected
interlocked
layered
supported
reinforced

Stability & Movement:

sturdy
strong
wobbly
stable
secure
leaning
collapsing
shifting

Structure & Shape:

tall/short, wide/narrow,
flat/curved, straight/angled,
balanced/uneven,
symmetrical/asymmetrical

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

“How did you make it stay up?”
“What might you try next?”
“What could you use to make it stronger?/Could it hold this?”
“How could you connect these pieces?”
“What is this part doing?”

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.

Avoid: “What is it?”

Comment first, question last.
Follow the child’s lead
Name techniques, not outcomes.
Celebrate the process over the product.

Small World Play Commentary

Sentence Starters

Notice:

"You're creating a story."
"You've chosen these characters..."
"They're moving towards..."

Describe:

"They're going on a journey together."
"This character looks like it's hiding."
"You've made a little world here."
"I can see a story beginning to form."

Stretch:

"I'm thinking... something might happen next..."
"It looks like this could be the start of a story..."
"Maybe something surprising is about to happen..."

Storytelling vocabulary for small world play

Starting a Story:

"Once upon a time, there was a..."
"One day, a... decided to..."
"In a faraway place, there lived a..."

Building the Story:

"Then, something unexpected happened..."
"After that, they decided to..."
"But suddenly..."
"It was tricky because..."
"They needed to find a way to..."

Resolution & Ending:

"In the end, they..."
"Finally, everything was..."
"So they decided to..."
"And from that day on..."

Linking to Child's Play:

"I can see this character is... so maybe..."
"It looks like they are trying to..."
"This part of your world could be where..."
"I wonder if this is where the story changes..."

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.

Avoid: "What's happening?"

Comment first, question last.

Follow the child's lead

Name techniques, not outcomes.

Celebrate the process over the product.

Creative Area Commentary

Sentence Starters

Notice:

"You've picked these colours..."
"You're exploring the..."
"You're pressing/dabbing/brushing..."

Describe:

"That's a bold line."
"You've made soft, gentle marks."
"These colours are blending together."
"I can see lots of layers here."
"That part looks smooth and even."
"You've created a pattern."

Stretch:

"I wonder what would happen if you tried a different tool..."
"You're using lots of one colour... what might happen if you added another?"
"That's a strong mark... you could try a softer one nearby."

Descriptive Vocabulary

Marks &

Lines:

wavy
zigzag
straight
curved
spiral
dotted
looping
jagged

Texture &

Effect:

smooth
rough
bumpy
thick
thin
smudged
blended

Colour &

Tone:

bright
bold
pale
dark
light
soft
vibrant
muted

Tools &

Actions:

brushing
dabbing
rolling
stamping
splattering
mixing
spreading

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

"What might you try next?"
"How did you make that effect?"
"What does this tool let you do?"
"How do these colours work together?"
"Would you like to add anything else?"

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.
Avoid: "What is it?"
Comment first, question last.
Follow the child's lead
Name techniques, not outcomes.
Celebrate the process over the product.

Sand Play Commentary

Sentence Starters

Notice:

"I can see you're scooping..."

"You're filling the..."

"You're pouring it into..."

"You're patting it down..."

Describe:

"That sand looks soft and fine."

"You've filled that right to the top."

"It's starting to pile up."

"That shape is holding together."

"The sand is slipping through the gaps."

"You're making it nice and smooth."

Stretch:

"I wonder what would happen if you added some water..."

"You're filling it up... I wonder what happens when it's full?"

"I wonder what you could use to move more sand at once..."

Descriptive Vocabulary

Texture &

Feel:

dry

wet

soft

gritty

smooth

rough

crumbly

sticky

compact

Actions:

scooping

pouring

filling

emptying

tipping

sifting

patting

digging

scraping

moulding

Quantity & Measure:

full/empty, more/less,
heavy/light, nearly full,
overflowing, half full, a
little/a lot

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

"What might you try next?"

"How did you make it stay like that?"

"What happens when you add more?"

"Which tool works best for that?"

"Can you tell me about what you're doing?"

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.

Avoid: "Are you making a sandcastle?"

Comment first, question last.

Follow the child's lead

Name techniques, not outcomes.

Celebrate the process over the product.

Water Play Commentary

Sentence Starters

Notice:

- "You're filling the..."
- "You've chosen the..."
- "You're tipping it into..."

Describe:

- "The water is flowing quickly."
- "It's dripping slowly."
- "That container is filling up."
- "It's starting to overflow."
- "The water is splashing."
- "You've made it pour smoothly."

Stretch:

- "I wonder what would happen if you lifted it higher..."
- "You're pouring carefully... I wonder what happens if you go faster?"
- "That's nearly full... I wonder what happens when it reaches the top?"
- "You've made it flow this way... I wonder how you could change the direction?"

Descriptive Vocabulary

Movement & Flow:

pouring
dripping
trickling
streaming
splashing
flowing
rushing
spilling

Actions: filling

emptying
tipping
scooping
squeezing
squirting
mixing

Speed & Change:

fast
slow
steady
quick
sudden
gentle
speeding up
slowing down

Quantity & Measure:

full / empty
more / less
nearly full
overflowing
half full
a little / a lot

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

- "What is happening to the water?"
- "What might you try next?"
- "How did you make it do that?"
- "What happens when you add more?"
- "Which tool works best?"
- "Can you tell me what you're doing?"

REMEMBER!

- Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.
- Avoid: "Be careful, don't spill it."**
- Comment first, question last.
- Follow the child's lead
- Name actions, changes and processes
- Celebrate exploration, curiosity and problem-solving

Reading Area Commentary

Sentence Starters

Notice:

- "I can see you're looking at..."
- "You're turning the pages..."
- "You're looking closely at the pictures..."

Describe:

- "That picture shows..."
- "This character looks like they are..."
- "I think something is happening here..."
- "This part looks important..."
- "The illustrations are showing us..."
- "This page is full of detail..."

Stretch:

- "I wonder what might be happening here..."
- "It looks like something is about to happen..."
- "I wonder how this character is feeling..."
- "This part makes me think..."
- "I wonder what might happen next..."

Adult Modelling Talk Frames

'Reading' the Illustrations:

- "I can see..."
- "It looks like..."
- "Maybe this is..."
- "This might be where..."
- "I notice that..."

Building Meaning:

- "I think this is happening because..."
- "This reminds me of..."
- "That part looks like it connects to..."
- "Maybe they are going to..."

Character & Feelings:

- "This character looks..."
- "They might be feeling... because..."
- "I can tell by their face that..."

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

- "What can you see on this page?"
- "What do you think is happening?"
- "What might happen next?"
- "How is this character feeling?"
- "What do you notice?"
- "Can you tell me about this part?"

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting

Avoid: "Can you read this?"

Comment first, question last
Follow the child's lead
Value looking, noticing and storytelling as reading

Celebrate engagement, curiosity and meaning-making

Message Centre Commentary Sheet

Sentence Starters

Notice:

"I can see you're..."

"Your hand is moving..."

"You're choosing to use..."

Describe:

"You've made a smudgy shadow here."

"That's a looping, swirling line."

"These colours are blending softly together."

Stretch:

"You're pressing firmly, I wonder what happens if you press lightly?"

"This part looks bold, you could try a softer mark nearby."

"You've created a pattern... I wonder where it might go next."

Descriptive Vocabulary for Mark-Making

wavy
zigzag
curved
straight
spiralling
dotted
broken
looping
swirling
jagged
tiny / chunky

muted, bright, pale / deep,
glowing, shadowy, speckled,
faded, sharp,, smudgy

soft
gentle
light
bold
firm
smudged
blended
layered
overlapping
cross-hatched

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

"What were you thinking about when you made this part?"

"What might you try next?"

"What does this tool let you do?"

"How did you make that effect?"

"Would you like to add any words to go with your marks?"

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.

Avoid: "What is it?"

Comment first, question last.

Follow the child's lead

Name techniques, not outcomes.

Celebrate the process over the product.

Home Corner Commentary Sheet

Sentence Starters

Notice:

"You're setting the table..."
"You're taking care of the..."
"You're putting the... here..."
"You're getting everything ready..."

Describe:

"You're looking after everyone."
"Everything is organised."
"You're getting things prepared."
"You're making a meal."
"This looks like a busy kitchen."

Stretch:

"I wonder who this is for..."
"It looks like something is about to happen..."
"I wonder what you might do next..."
"This feels like part of a story..."
"I wonder what they might say to each other..."

Adult Modelling Talk Frames

Everyday Talk:

"I'm just making dinner, it will be ready soon."
"Can you help me set the table?"
"We need one plate each."
"Let's tidy up before we eat."

"I'll pour the drinks."

Role & Dialogue:

"Hello, how can I help you today?"
"Would you like something to eat?"

"It's time for dinner."

"Let's get ready to go out."

"I'll take care of that."

Sequencing & Routine:

"First, we need to..."

"Next, we can..."

"After that..."

"Then it's time to..."

Open-Ended Questions (Used Sparingly)

"What were you thinking about when you made this part?"

"What might you try next?"

"What does this tool let you do?"

"How did you make that effect?"

"Would you like to add any words to go with your marks?"

REMEMBER!

Pause 5-10 seconds after commenting/questioning.

Avoid: taking over/directing play

Comment first, question last.

Follow the child's lead

Model real-life talk and routines

Celebrate interaction, imagination and communication