Some Language/Play Characteristics
of Children 2-5 Years Old

At age 2-3, your child
- *uses 2-3 word phrases/sentences*
- *has a vocabulary of about 300 words*
- understands simple questions and instructions
- identifies body parts
- starts "conversations" with himself & with his toys
- makes up questions like: What is that?, What is this?, Where is my...?
- thinks of himself by his own name
- starts using pronouns (1, you, etc.)
- uses the word "no" in his language
- identifies and names pictures
- listens to story books
- begins to use language in imaginative ways
- sequence related actions in play such as preparing food for doll, feeding it, wiping its mouth

At age 3-4, your child
- *uses 4-5 word sentences*
- *has a vocabulary of about 1000 words*
- is able to sing songs
- starts to understand place such as, "Put the cube (under, in front of, behind)"
- uses words to relate what he observes
- very often practices talking to herself
- knows her last name
- can talk about a story or relate an idea
- engages in role-playing
- begins to use language for fantasies, jokes, and teasing
- corrects others

At age 4-5, your child
- *has sentence length of 4-5 words*
- *has a vocabulary of nearly 1500 words*
- follows commands even though objects not present
- can speak of imaginary conditions such as "suppose that" or "I hope"
- asks **many** questions, although more interested in how answers fit his own thoughts rather than just the explanation
- can identify and name most colors and shapes
- begins to use complex sentences (i.e. "because", "if,")
- asks "who?" and "why?"
- uses contractions such as "it's a" or "there's a"
- uses past tense
- copies a line and a circle
- stays with one activity 11-12 minutes

At age 5, your child
- *has sentence length of 5-6 words*
- *has a vocabulary of around 2000 words*
- defines objects by their use (You eat with a fork) and can tell what objects are made of
- knows spatial relations like "on top," "behind," "far" and "near"
- knows her address
- knows common opposites like big/little and hard/soft
- understands "same" and "different"
- uses future, present, and past tense questions for information
- stays with one activity for 12-13 minutes
- uses all types of sentences, some of which will be complex