



Playtesting FAQs

Playtesting is the opportunity to get feedback on a toy concept from *real* kids. How cool is that?! Since this experience will be different than other interactions you've had with children, it helps to be fully prepared. Here are some answers to frequently asked questions:

Who should participate?

At least two people from your team should participate. One teammate can introduce the toy to the users, while the other teammate records what the users say and do by taking descriptive notes. If you want to capture artifacts, such as photo or video, you *must always* ask the child's "grown-up" for permission. Of course, having more than two teammates attend will allow more people to experience playtesting firsthand. Though keep in mind though that some users, especially children, may be intimidated by a bunch of people observing them, so teams with multiple members should consider taking shifts.

What materials do we need for playtesting?

Bring a representation of your toy concept, such as a poster with a large sketch and interactive components, a storyboard, and/or a physical model. These materials will allow children to interact physically with some "thing", rather than rely on your verbal descriptions of the toy. Before playtesting, get together as a team to divide labor and set internal deadlines to ensure that these materials are completed before playtesting. In addition, you'll want to bring a notebook or tablet to record your observations during the event.

How do we introduce ourselves to children during playtesting?

When you meet your user(s), smile and introduce yourselves. You may want to crouch down so that your eyes are on the same level. Ask your user's name and their age or grade, and ask them about their "grown-up" (if accompanied). Give them a concise introduction to your design – this could be your 45-second idea pitch. Explain that you are showing them an idea for a toy and that their honest feedback will help make the idea even better!

What do we do while the children are interacting with our concept?

Embrace the silence! Silently observe how the users interact with your toy, and consider the following:

- Do they seem to have the right mental model of what the toy is supposed to do?
- Do they seem to have fun? What are the cues that tell you that?
- What are their difficulties (if any) using it?
- If they seem like they really don't understand how to use it, you can explain/guide them.

A user may have a lot to say, or may say little or nothing. In either case, your job is to listen carefully, observe, and record. If a user is engaged with the concept, you might follow up with questions, though be careful not to bias them. For example, asking "This is fun, isn't it?", or even saying "Good job!" can bias users to respond positively and perform certain behaviors that seem to please you. Instead, if you do ask questions, make sure they are open-ended with neutral language, such as, "How do you play tag with your friends?", "Is this game similar to any games you play at home?", or "What suggestions do you have to improve this toy"? You might

also observe and engage the grown-ups as well, particularly if the toy is meant to be enjoyed by adults and children together.

What do we do after playtesting?

Share your playtesting notes and artifacts in Slack, so everyone on the team can read them. This information should spark a deeper discussion among your team. Questions to consider might include:

- What aspects of the toy did the users seem to enjoy (e.g., sound, texture, game play)?
- What grown-up behavior suggested they might want to buy the toy for their child (e.g., “My daughter likes outdoor water toys, and your idea helps create that vibe indoors”, or “My kids like working together more than competing”)?
- What about the concept did users find confusing or boring? Were there indications that your concept did not align with the age range represented at playtesting?

Remember, different users may give different feedback on the same design concept, so you may have received seemingly conflicting responses during playtesting. It’s up to your team, with the guidance of your instructor and mentor, to reflect together and decide what underlying aspects of the design you should focus on as you move forward.