Fisher-Price® Linkimals™ toys “link” together to help babies & toddlers have a whole new way play. 21 of these interactive musical pals offers lots of learning play in a new way. But through Linkimals™ Technology each toy recognizes when other Linkimals™ toys are nearby — creating an immersive play space with synchronized music and colorful light shows that make learning more fun (because there’s more than one)! Linkimals™ toys were inspired by watching real babies & toddlers at play in our Play Lab. As we continued to see families add to their collection, we set out to study specific research questions:

1. How do children & their caregivers interact and play with linked toys?
2. How do children respond when a toy delivers an electronic phrase or prompt?
3. What types of features on Linkimals™ toys are played with and looked at the most?

Our goal was to understand more about the different ways children interact with these learning pals that are Fisher-Price™ Linkimals™ toys.

What we studied

Eye-tracking technology has proven invaluable in helping our Play Lab researchers learn from our tiniest testers early on in development. So babies and toddlers who are not yet able to verbalize feedback in their own words, specially fitted caps or glasses and analysis software help us to record and analyze data. Our movements when looking & playing with a toy. So, the Play Lab team can literally see toys through the eyes of a child.

The science behind the play

Eye-tracking technology

Eye-tracking technology was inspired by watching real babies & toddlers at play in the Play Lab. So babies and toddlers who are not yet able to verbalize feedback in their own words, specially fitted caps or glasses and analysis software will help us to record and analyze data. When we used Observer XT software from Noldus Information Technology to look at play behaviors and language use between adult and child, data showed the interaction between these linked toys also encouraged conversations between children and their caregivers. This reinforces important learning opportunities through playful interactions, which encourage language development and spark shared moments of connection.

Observer XT software tool

The Observer XT software from Noldus Information Technology compiles data in a visual timeline, providing our researchers with the tools to record, annotate and scientifically analyze what they observe. They can then connect these observations to the scientific literature to draw more conclusions. Observations reveal that children’s eye movements are affected by the toys they play with. To understand what happens in the brain when children look back and forth from toy to toy, we used Observer XT software to code and analyze all play sessions for play behaviors and language use between kids and their caregivers.

Results: proven to promote learning

The data collected in our Play Lab using these technologies revealed that electronically linked toys can reinforce early learning connections in little brains. Linkimals™ toys work together to collectively introduce learning concepts as kids grow. Pressing the letter “S” on the Otter’s tummy then links to Sloth, who starts singing and dancing about the letter “S”. Analysis revealed that children’s eye movements were tracking back and forth from the letter “S” on the Otter to the Sloth time and time again. That kind of interaction opens the door to discover new ways for children to learn and play — ways that wouldn’t have existed had the toys not been electronically linked.

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Help your child explore different learning skills in each Linkimal™

- Smooth Move Sloth™
  - Teaches: Numbers, Shapes, Colors
- Happy Shapes Hedgehog™
  - Teaches: First words, Alphabet, Friendship
- A to Z Otter
  - Teaches: Stacking, Colors
- Lights & Colors Llama
  - Teaches: Counting, Shapes, Colors
- Musical Moos™
  - Teaches: Stackable, Sounds, Friendship
- Musical Moos™
  - Teaches: Stackable, Sounds, Friendship
- Play Together Pupee
  - Teaches: Counting, Shapes, Materials
- Rojo the Beaver™
  - Teaches: Counting, Shapes, Colors

Take the whole Linkimals™ Crew home with you!