There are at least two main types of play skills, social play skills and independent play skills and usually most goals I've seen in the past focus on social play skills, but if independent play skills are not taught correctly, it becomes independent stim time and the child really doesn't know how to keep him or herself busy. Hi, I'm Dr. Mary Barbera, autism mom, Board Certified Behavior Analyst, online course creator, and bestselling author of The Verbal Behavior Approach. Each week I provide you with some of my ideas about turning autism around so if you haven't subscribed to my YouTube channel you can do that now. Today I'm sharing a small excerpt from a recent live Q and A session discussing how to teach children independent play skills. This three year old has good independent play skills, but lately he has been very repetitive in that he asks for a game or puzzle, opens it and puts pieces on the floor, doesn't really do anything and asks tidy up in a couple of minutes.

Could this be because he's already played with the toys and puzzles and he's mastered all of them and is just bored, which calls for a change in his toys? Um, behavior analysts recommend starting with simple activities in steps like a circuit when we complete them, then there's reinforcement. Um, yeah, I think, um, there's independent toy play is one goal and one issue and then we have, um, uh, more, uh, social game playing and those sorts of things. So I would work on both. You want him to keep himself entertained. What I find though in a lot of kids with autism, if it's not taught and monitored well, that independent play often becomes independent stim time. Um, and independent work activities become independent stim activities. I remember way back, I was in a classroom, one of my very first classrooms in 2003 and I walked in and this boy with very few skills, he was probably in first grade and you know, I had seen him a couple of times just trying to like triage the whole classroom.

Um, and I looked over and I said, what's he doing over there? And she said, Oh, he’s in independent work activities. And he was, he was sticking his fingers down his throat and like this. And I'm like, that's not independent work. That's independent stim. Um, so that can get like really out of hand, especially when you don't, when you have him do the same toys over and over again or have him look at the same books over and over again. So, um, there might be, you know, like literally a stim box of toys that that's what he could do. He can stim with it. I mean, you have to think about like when you're cooking, when you're getting a shower, what, you know, what do you want your child to be doing until he develops real leisure activities. Would you rather have him on an iPad watching TV, stacking blocks over and over again the same way, playing with toys over and over again the same way? Um, you could have him do mastered things in order. Um, and that might be like your behavior analyst is suggesting make it like kind of a circuit, but you're going to have to make sure that he completes this. And then goes to the next thing. Completes it, goes to the next thing, um, and cleans it up in the middle of it, um, that could very well work. There is a good book called Activity Schedules for Young Children with Autism. I've showed you in the past like little books where you can, you can teach, chain skills together. You can teach independent work activities by having this little photo book and going, okay, now I gotta do this. Now I gotta do this. The other thing you can do is you can get like maybe a six drawer plastic, uh, container and drawer one is this puzzle and with the, you know, all the materials, he would need to take it out to do it, put it, put it away, put it back in, close the door, and then you could rotate those or rotate the pictures. So that each day is, is, uh, you know, if you did the book, then he could just go, Oh, I'm supposed to do, uh, the, the vehicle puzzle. He goes over, he gets the vehicle puzzle, he sits down, he does it, he cleans it up. He puts it back, Oh, now I'm gonna do X, Y, or Z. And so that is a novel way to kind of rotate your toys, keep him busy, and not let it become really stimmy. Wherever you're watching this, I'd love it if you would leave me a comment, give me a thumbs up, share this video with others who may benefit and for more information, you can attend a free online workshop at marybarbera.com/workshop and I'll see you right here next week.