

WHY PLAY?



Why should we play?

Children learn by exploring and interacting with toys and their environment based on what they are interested in and motivated by. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Adults can join play to help children learn and practice new skills.

Play can be divided into 2 areas.

Directed play – this is play that is facilitated by an adult with a specific goal or direction for the play. This could be play to practice learning a new speech sound, new vocabulary word, or to learn some new concepts or social skills



Undirected play – this is play that is not directed by an adult. It allows children to learn how to work in groups, to share, to negotiate, to resolve conflicts, and to learn self-advocacy skills. Undirected play has been suggested to improve physical activity levels in children



Daily Practice Ideas

Day 1: Move and jump around, talking about the movements such as:
Jumping, stretching, climbing, skipping, rolling, balancing

Day 2: Practice problem solving during play: role play, create characters, use puppets, find ways to practice solving problems

Day 3: Play a following directions game: practice sequencing (first, then, last) while sorting objects

Day 4: Go on a nature walk outside and play like an animal would: a bunny hopping, a dog running, a squirrel climbing

Day 5: While baking or cooking, pretend to be T.V. characters: play as if you were in Paw Patrol, PJ Masks, or another T.V. show

See back of page for additional information and resources!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Check out these links for more resources and activity ideas

- Children's books provide great models for creative play. For example, "[The nose book](#)" by Al Perkins, "[The Lost Dinosaur Bone](#)" by Mercer Mayer, "[Why I love Winter](#)" illustrated by Daniel Howarth. You can play a game to search for different noses, get creative searching for a lost dinosaur bone, or follow some of the activities in "Why I Love Winter".
- Check out this [article from Hanen](#) on playing with playdough – it includes a recipe for how to make playdough, and some great tips on how to get more language out of your child during the activity!
- This website walks through the [Stages of Play](#), and how to support your children with different ideas at each stage.

Play Stage	What to Look for
Solitary Play	Children tend to play on their own. They typically want to play with their own toys, their own way. For example, the child will play with blocks while other children are playing with puppets.
Spectator Play	Children want to observe how others play. They may stand beside other children, watch them, and then move on to something else. For example, the child might not play at all, and would rather watch children play with Lego.
Parallel Play	Children will play beside each other, but not with the same toy or activity. For example, one child may play with blocks beside the child playing with cars
Associate Play	Children play at the same activity, but not with each other. For example, two children may play at a playdough table, but they don't play with each other.
Cooperative Play	Children play at the same activity, and intentionally interact with their peers. Social communication is important in this stage. For example, two children might work together to build a train track, asking questions and giving ideas during play.

As we play with children, it is important to remember that children at different stages may want to play differently. Knowing how children prefer to play will allow us opportunities to teach the child how to play at a higher level, and at a level that is appropriate for their age.

