

Play is Learning

Play may look messy, silly, noisy or repetitive, but your child is doing some serious learning. There is no “right” way to play. Any type of play will give your child the opportunity to develop new skills.

How play helps child development

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| Social/ Emotional | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing with your child helps build social relationships and attachment. • Playing with others teaches your child cooperation and empathy. • Your child expresses themselves through play. When you play with your child you boost their feeling of self-worth. • When your child pretends, it helps them understand and learn to control their feelings. |
| Physical | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As your child explores with their body, they strengthen large and small muscles. • As your child repeats actions, they gain hand-eye coordination and other skills needed for later learning. |
| Cognitive | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretend play helps your child make sense of their everyday experiences. • Playing enhances your child’s persistence, attention span, memory, and ability to focus. All these skills are important for success in school. |
| Language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The more practice your child has at making sounds, even the silly ones, the better your child’s tongue and mouth can coordinate to say words. • When your child cooperates with you or other playmates, your child uses words to tell you their ideas. |

What you can do

- ▶ Practice playfulness, it may feel strange and hard at first but doing things like silly dances, making lots of noise, getting messy and sitting on the floor together will help their brain make new connections.
- ▶ There may be times your child does not want you to play with them and that is okay! Play beside them so you are close by and can talk about what they are doing. “Wow, you built a tall tower! Are you going to knock it down?”
- ▶ Let your child try to solve problems during play. Praise attempts as this builds confidence in their ability to tackle challenges. If your child needs help, step in before they get frustrated.
- ▶ Your child may not like it when you tell them to stop playing and transition to something else. Give warnings so your child has time to finish play and be ready to move to the next activity.
- ▶ Play can happen at any time! You can play while cooking, shopping, or bath time. Let your child decide when they feel like playing –scheduling playtime does not always work with babies and toddlers.