

GETTING READY TO LEARN



Getting Ready to Learn

“My brain needs different sorts of play to help it grow.”



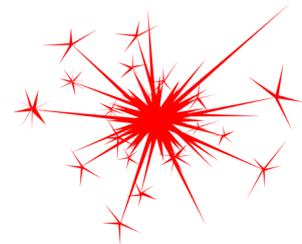
Why Play is Important:

Play is central to your child’s learning and development. When your child plays, it gives them lots of different ways to learn. Children benefit most if they experience different types of play. Adults should encourage different play by providing sufficient space, and a range of items—toys or everyday household materials.

Set aside some time each week to engage in quality play time with your child and do exactly what he or she wants to do. Your child should lead the play time and you follow.

Why Children Play

- ⇒ Play gives children different sensory, physical and cognitive experiences. Experiences build connections in the brain, which helps children develop. That’s why play is like **‘fireworks’** going off in the brain.
- ⇒ Play promotes healthy habits by actively engaging children in the world around them and increases their activity levels.
- ⇒ Play is a natural stress reliever and increases happiness in children. Children often work out their anxiety and fears through play.
- ⇒ Play allows children to test out new ideas. During play they are actively investigate and continually make connections.
- ⇒ Children make their own decisions during play, they begin to make choices and see the consequences of their choices.
- ⇒ During play young children practice a form of mindfulness as they become engrossed in play, they suspend awareness of time and space and become fully occupied.



Play Ideas For Pre-schoolers

- ⇒ Cardboard boxes, milk containers, wooden spoons, empty pot plant containers, sticks, crunched up paper, plastic buckets, saucepans and old clothes, shoes and handbags are great to encourage imaginative, unstructured play.
- ⇒ Simple jigsaw puzzles and matching games like animal dominoes help improve your child’s memory and concentration.
- ⇒ Playdough will help develop your child’s fine motor skills.
- ⇒ Favourite music, together with pot and pans are great for a concert or band.
- ⇒ Balls can encourage kicking, throwing or rolling. When you are encouraging your child to kick or throw, try to get them to use one side of the body, then the other.
- ⇒ Cardboard boxes, buckets can encourage your child to run, to build, push or drag.
- ⇒ Chalk, rope, music can encourage jumping, kicking, stomping, stepping and running
- ⇒ Dress-up games with scarves, hats and so on are good for imagination and creativity.
- ⇒ Home-made obstacle courses can get your child moving in different ways. Instruct them to crawling, jump, run change directions and speed.



CREATIVE PLAY

Young children like to be spontaneous in their creative play, so it's good to follow their lead. On other occasions they may want your help. You can use the opportunity to show your child that there's more than one way to do something. For example, there's more than one way to draw a person, build a sandcastle or play a drum. This lets children know they can develop their own ideas.

And whatever artworks your child comes up with, give your child lots of praise. For example, 'I love the picture you drew. You really know how to make the colours pop'. This boosts confidence and encourages your child to keep playing creatively.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

- Give your child an empty cardboard box— your child could paint the box or decorate it with craft materials or help them to make it into a house, a robot, a truck, an animal – whatever your child is interested in.
- Use empty kitchen or toilet rolls or small plastic juice bottles to make people. Draw on faces, stick on paper clothes, and use cotton wool for hair. Your child could use these new toys to make up stories.
- Go on a nature walk to look for natural materials to make art. Gather twigs, leaves, flowers and create pictures with them. Fallen leaves, flowers and weeds are good for making into pictures or dip into paint and make collages
- Use small plastic lids, bun cases, pasta such as macaroni for threading and making jewellery.
- Keep a 'busy box' with things like string, wrapping paper scraps, lollipop sticks, stickers and straws that your child can use to make whatever she wants.
- Create a home art gallery for your child's artwork. A kitchen wall or pinboard is ideal. You could ask your child to choose one special painting each week to frame in the centre of the gallery. This shows that you value your pre-schooler's creations.



DRAMA

Pre-schoolers love dramatic play. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Instead of throwing out old clothes, start a dress-up box or bag. You can also find cheap and unusual clothes and props at charity shops.
- Use puppets to put on shows. It's easy to make simple puppets from socks, bags & sticks.. You can use a cardboard box to create a puppet theatre too.
- Use drama, song and movement to act out things from daily life. It could be going to the doctors, playing house, going to the shops, being a fireman – whatever your child enjoys..
- At story time, encourage your child to act out roles from a story with movements or sounds. For example, your child could pretend to be one of the monsters or animal from their favourite book.
- Video your child as he/she plays. Help him use a movie-making app to make it into a special video to share with family and friends.



MUSIC, MOVEMENT AND DANCE

Music, movement and dance can often be part of simple, everyday play with your child:

- # Give your child a saucepan, a saucepan lid and a wooden spoon – your child can use this as a drum kit.
- # Watch short videos of animals making noise and moving in the wild. Your child might enjoy copying animal movements and sounds.
- # Play instruments in ways that match animals and their movement. For example, shake a shaker slowly like a plodding elephant or loudly like an excited monkey.
- # Encourage your child to march, roll, stamp, hop, slide and twirl. Put on some favourite music to get your child moving or coming up with new actions.
- # Help your child develop a sense of rhythm with songs, chants and rhymes like 'Incy wincy spider', 'Heads and shoulders', 'Five cheeky monkeys' and 'Jack and Jill'.
- # Point out sounds with steady beats, like a ticking clock or a dripping tap. Encourage your child to clap, tap, march or bang to the beat.



CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY

Children build towers and cities with blocks, play in the sand, draw murals with chalk on the sidewalk. Constructive play allows children to experiment with objects; find out combinations that work and don't work; and learn basic knowledge about stacking, building, drawing, making music and constructing. It also gives children a sense of accomplishment and empowers them with control of their environment. Children who are comfortable manipulating objects and materials also become good at manipulating words, ideas and concepts.

When we think of construction play, we think of building blocks or brand names but do not worry if your child does not enjoy building bricks as construction play includes other activities such as putting together a train track, creating with play dough, building sand castles, creating a den with blankets, creating things from junk materials, even digging in the sand or soil.

Making the Most of Construction Play:-

- ◆ Add a range of loose materials to your child's construction sets such as bits of material, twigs, stones, bottle tops ribbon, planks of wood, cotton wool
- ◆ Add some figures and vehicles to be used with blocks
- ◆ When constructing things from junk art, add other materials such as googly eyes, pipe cleaners, feathers, buttons etc
- ◆ Add similar materials when playing with play dough to extend the play - lollipop sticks, pipe cleaners, buttons, curling ribbon.



PHYSICAL PLAY

Pre-school children should be physically active for at least **three hours per day**. Whilst it almost seems natural to allow children to play outside during the warm spring and summer months we are sometimes much more hesitant about being outdoors when winter comes along but being outside is very good for our children's health..

WINTER

Remember there is no such as bad weather only inappropriate clothing



- * Put on raincoats, wellies and splash and jump in puddles.
- * Go on a walk in the rain! Put on their wellies, take umbrellas and head off for a walk
- * Build a snowman using props like hats, scarves, twigs, sticks and carrots
- * Rainy weather creates mud—make mud pies, paint with mud or jump in muddy puddles.
- * In Autumn allow your child to kick the leaves and roll down banks covered in leaves.
- * Go on a bug hunt, move stones and rocks to see what is hiding underneath
- * Build a fire and toast marshmallows.
- * Go for a walk at night and look for stars. Count them and talk about their shape, size etc.

SUMMER

- Teddy bear picnic. Have lunch outside and invite some cuddly friends to join you.
- Build a den by gathering together some props (let your child help you) - sheets, blankets, rope, pegs, sticks and twigs, cushions or mats. Be creative!
- Water painting. Give your child a bucket of water and a paint brush. They can paint walls, pavements, fences.
- Chalk—most bargain shops will sell cheap chunky chalks. Children can chalk on pavement, walls fences, bricks and it will all wash off.
- Make an obstacle course outside.
- Take them on a walk but let them choose the route.
- Plant seeds like cress or tomatoes as they are easy to grow and can be eaten.
- Go for a walk at night and look for stars. Count them and talk about their shape, size etc.
- Make pictures from fallen leaves, twigs, grass, and stones or shells and seaweed at the beach



PHYSICAL PLAY INDOORS

Sometimes it is just not possible to get outdoors. Here are some ideas to get children moving indoors:-



- ❑ Freeze Dance- The rules are simple to understand for a young child—just keeping dancing until the music stop, then freeze. This game can help develop your pre-schoolers listening skills. Add variety by getting your child to freeze as tall as a giant, as small as a mouse.
- ❑ Play Balloon Volleyball—make a net by typing string across two chairs and see if your child can bat the balloon over the net
- ❑ Pick a book that has a word that’s often repeated. For example, choose the word “Gruffalo” if you’re reading *The Gruffalo*. Every time the word comes up in the story, your child has to jump on the spot
- ❑ Crab Carry— Teach your child how to walk like a crab by placing their palms and feet to the floor while raising their stomach up to face the sky. Staying in that pose, see how long they can balance , place something like a bean bag on their belly. Once they have mastered the stance get them to have races. Include some variety by getting them to walk like a spider; crawl like a baby; or hop like a bunny.

SENSORY PLAY/MESSY PLAY

Kids just love getting mucky and making a mess – whether that’s squishing jelly through their hands, smearing mud across their faces or crunching rice krispies between their fingers!

Sensory play includes any activity that stimulates your child’s senses of touch, smell, taste, movement, balance, sight and hearing. Not only does messy play enhance a child’s cognitive development and learning, but it also improves a child’s physical development as well.

- ❑ Sand and Water are extremely popular ways of engaging children in messy play activities, stimulating a child’s tactile and sensory experience.
- ❑ Fill a tray with shaving foam and let your child draw pictures, or add their toys. Add further interest by adding drops of food colouring and get your child to mix it into the shaving foam.
- ❑ **Messy play:** play with paints, water, sand or dirt is a great outlet for children’s emotions and helps to develop senses like touch and smell. Children also enjoy exploring different textures, smells, colours and so on.

Children just love the feel of gooey gunge and messy hands! Let the children explore their senses and learn in a fun and exciting environment with these alternative messy play ideas and activities for your early years setting.

Simple Play Dough

2 cups of plain flour, 2 tablespoons of oil, 1/2 cup of salt up to 1 1/2 litres of boiling water. Food colouring optional. Flavourings can also added or textures such as glitter, beans,



Baking Soda Bubbles

Cover the tray with baking soda and sprinkle in some glitter. Give your little one a spray bottle of vinegar and show them that by spraying the baking soda, the ingredients react and create



Moon Sand

Use 1 part baby oil/ vegetable oil to 8 parts flour. Mix. Then add toys— cars, trucks, people and fairies. Add baking items— bun cases etc.



Gloop

Get a box of cornflour, put in a bowl and very slowly add between 1/2 cup to 1 cup of water. When the Gloop starts to look like liquid but behaves like a solid it is ready.

