

Early Childhood Newsletter

Infant Toddler Edition

READY! SET! PLAY!



Play and Development

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There is nothing more natural for young children than to play. Play is the tool young children use to learn through active hands-on experiences. Play helps children develop skills and learn about the world around them.

Physical Large Motor Skills~ Play such as walking, running, jumping, climbing helps children to develop large muscles, balance, strength and coordination.

Physical Small Motor Skills~ Children build strength in their hands and fingers by using crayons, play dough, and toys that come part and fit together. In doing so, they develop more precise control.

Thinking (Cognitive) Skills~ Young children need to experience the real thing to understand it so play materials need to be concrete. Children need a lot of experience using objects and materials to gain understanding of shapes, colors, numbers, and more complex concepts such as opposites and time.

Problem Solving Skills~ In play, children learn how to try different solutions and make decisions to solve a particular problem.

Language Skills~ As children are developing a greater understanding of objects and materials, adults and peers are using language and having con-



versations to enhance vocabulary development and learning.

Social-Emotional Skills~ When children are playing along side or with one another, they are learning how to get along with others and developing self-control. Play with others provides opportunity to learn about emotions and ex-

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WE WANT YOU...for the Infant Toddler Project


- Are you a director overseeing infant/toddler classrooms?
- Are you an infant/toddler caregiver?
- Do you work in a STAR 2 program?
- Do you want get **FREE** support related to challenging behaviors, scheduling, classroom environments, lesson planning, managing your classroom, interactions, building relationships and parent engagement, or any other aspect of infant/toddler care teaching?

DON'T MISS OUT ON THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COACHING!!!

IT resources, lending library, earn up to 6 DPW hours



Development of Play Skills for Infants and Toddlers

<p>Babies B-4 Months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smile (usually around 6 weeks of age) and begin to coo (make sounds like “oooooo” or “aaaaa”) (usually around 4 months) • Prefer human faces over objects or toys • Turn toward familiar voices and faces • Follow objects with their eyes and recognize familiar faces and objects • Begin to explore their hands by bringing them to their face or putting them in their mouth
<p>Babies 4-7 Months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy social games with a caregiver such as peek-a-boo and patty cake • Bring toys to their mouth • Can use their fingers and thumb to pick up objects • Enjoy looking at themselves in a baby-safe mirror • Laugh and babble (saying things like “ba-ba-ba-ba”) • Distinguish feelings by listening to the tone of your voice and the voices of other loved ones (Babies can tell when you are sad, upset, or happy just by the tone of your voice.) 
<p>Babies 8-12 Months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might begin to make recognizable sounds (like “Ma” or “Da”) and repeat or copy sounds/word they hear you say, like “Hi!” or “Bye bye!” • Communicate nonverbally by pointing, gesturing, pulling up, or crawling. • Play games such as peek-a-boo and patty cake. • Use some objects correctly to imitate actions, like holding a toy phone to their ear or holding a cup to their mouth. • Explore objects by shaking or banging them. • Might become shy around strangers. • Might cry when Mom or Dad or a primary caregiver leaves.
<p>Toddlers 13-24 Months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoy playing with objects such as wooden spoons, cardboard boxes, and empty plastic food containers. Toddlers also enjoy toys like board books, balls, stackable cups or blocks, dolls, simple puzzles, etc. • Have fun filling containers up with water, sand, or toys and then dumping them out. • Enjoy watching other children play. The child may look on but may not want to join the other children in play. • Usually plays alone or next to other children. • Might offer toys to caregiver or other children, but might want them right back. • Might choose to play close to other children using the same kind of toys or materials, but not necessarily interact with them. • Will struggle when sharing and turn taking.
<p>Toddlers 25-36 Months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Might play with other children but in a brief or limited way. For example, a child might play “monsters” and run around and chase other children for a brief time. • Older toddlers might begin to cooperate with other toddlers in a shared play activity. For example, children might work together to build a block tower. • Begin to use their imaginations in play. For example, a child might pretend to do household chores in the dramatic play area. • Still play alone frequently. • Will still struggle with sharing and turn taking.

The Value of PLAY

1. Play is the framework for learning.
2. Play supports and helps children integrate all areas of development: physical, thinking (cognitive), language and social-emotional.
3. Play is how children explore the world.
4. Play helps children learn to deal with feelings.
5. Play encourages children to interact socially.
6. Play provides the foundation for later academic learning.
7. Play gives children opportunities to solve problems.
8. Play helps children discover what they can do.
9. Play encourages children to express themselves and use their creativity and imagination.
10. Play gives children a sense of control and power.

A Closer Look...What do you think?

“PLAY IS FREELY CHOSEN”

Do you think having children all play with the same materials at the same time is play? Why or why not?

“PLAY IS PROCESS ORIENTED”

Young children at play are often more involved in doing an activity, rather than creating a product. Is this a true statement? How can this guide you and planning for your environment and daily activities?

“IN PLAY, EVERY CHILD CAN BE SUCCESSFUL”

At times a young child may not join in an activity. What can you as the caregiver do to assist this child in play?

“PLAY IS SELF-MOTIVATED”

In free play, satisfaction from the activity comes from within. Do you think that children need stickers and prizes to become involved? To exhibit appropriate behaviors?

“PLAY INVOLVES ACTIVE PARTICIPATION”

Infants and toddlers are ready to explore their new world. Many activities are passive where the child does not interact more than watching and listening. What kind of activities would engage the child in more active involvement?

CHECK PAGE 8 FOR AND FURTHER DISCUSSION



Encouraging Play



Caregivers and parents can encourage children to play each and every day to explore and learn new skills.

Large Muscle Motor Play-running, jumping, climbing, playing with a ball

Small Muscle Motor Play-feeding self, crayons, puzzles, sorting toys

Construction Play-building with blocks and other materials

Make-believe Play-let's pretend to be someone else like a mommy or daddy

Symbolic Play-turning a block into a phone to talk to grandma

Language Play-telling stories and singing songs

Sensory Play-playing in mud and water

Rough-and-Tumble Play-climbing and exploring the world from different places

Mastery Play-play with me again and again and I will learn to do new things

Supporting PLAY

- **Safety and Health** Ensure materials are over 1" diameter to avoid choking hazards
- **Sanitation** Mouthed toys must be sanitized before being placed back in the play environment
- **Stability and Order** Materials should be organized and accessible; labeling shelves helps children know where materials belong; rotation of toys should happen on a slow basis to not overwhelm the children
- **Scale and Comfort** Infants and toddlers need child-sized materials and ample space to move around and explore freely
- **Simplicity and Convenience** Spaces need to be organized with materials for play and materials for daily routines within easy reach/accessibility
- **Seclusion and Choice** Create a place for "alone time" for children to be away from other children for awhile and provide opportunity for choices throughout the entire day
- **Stimulation** Understand the importance of a balance-not too much stimulation, not too little stimulation
- **Softness** The environment should be homey rather than set up as a formal school classroom
- **Sensory Appealing** Include music, mirrors, light, varied textures, etc. for young children to explore
- **Soothing and Sunny** Windows and natural lighting are a plus; avoid bold paint colors that may over-stimulate the children

Schedule Time for PLAY

The majority of the daily schedule should allow children time for child-directed free play activities. The role of the caregiver is to plan play activities and set up the learning environment so children can make choices for play.

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

Children Arrive

- Greet each child and family
- Free play

Mid-Morning

- Wash hands
- Breakfast or snack
- Free play w/additional adult-directed activities
- Toileting and wash hands

Late Morning

- Outdoor/indoor large muscle play
- Gathering for stories, music, etc.
- Lunch
- Rest & Relaxation Time preparation

Early Afternoon

- Rest & Relaxation Time

Mid-Afternoon

- Quiet play for children who wake early
- Toileting and wash hands
- Snack
- Free play activities
- Outdoor/indoor large muscle play

Late Afternoon

- Free play activities
- Toileting and wash hands; prepare to go home

Children Depart

- Talk with parents
- Clean up room
- Prepare for next day activities



Choosing TOYS

Here are some types of toys that can be helpful for learning. While they are categorized by age range, you will find that many will be useful at various stages.

Birth to 9 months: Toys that engage your baby's senses, such as mobiles, rattles, chew toys, and chunky board and cloth books. Toys that help him learn cause and effect, such as pop-up toys and busy boxes.

9 to 18 months: Toys that imitate real life, such as plastic tools, play food, and animal farms. Problem-solving toys that help children learn how things fit together, such as shape sorters and nesting cups. Push and pull toys and balls also let toddlers move their active bodies.

18 to 36 months: Materials that help them use their hands to create, such as play dough, crayons, and finger paints. Objects that help children use their imaginations, such as dress-up clothes, action and animal figures, dolls, and stuffed animals.

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, play is serious learning."

—Mr. Rogers

TOYS from “Beautiful Junk”



SPIN THE BOTTLE! Find an empty plastic water bottle. Now find some floor space where you make a circle of board books. Put the bottle in the middle and spin it. Watch it spin around and around. When it stops, read the book that the bottle is pointing to! Play with an individual child or in a small group.



BALANCING ACT Place a plastic cup upside down on the floor and put a disposable pizza pan on top so that it balances. Let your toddler put some letters or blocks on top to see how many can be put on before it falls. Do it again! Each time the child puts a letter or block in the pan, say the letter or color or shape.

FLASHLIGHT HUNT Playing in the dark can be fun! Before you start this activity, place some favorite games or books around the room. Let the child turn the light switch off and on. Ask the child to find the teddy bear with the flashlight, etc. Review parts of the room. Talk about shapes, size, color, over and under, etc.



POST NAP SURPRISE When the child(ren) are asleep line up all the toy cars and trains somewhere in the classroom (can be done with other materials as well). When the child wakes up, say the toys were playing while he/she was napping and he needs to see what's going on.



BALL RAMP BOX Here's a fun game your toddler will enjoy. Take an empty box and tape the opening shut. Cut a big circle out of one end. Cut the top of the box out, leaving the one end opposite of the circle in tact. Push the top down into the box and tape the one end to the inside of the box, making a sort of ramp. Let your toddler put a ball in the top so it will hit the ramp and roll onto the floor. Make a game to see how far the ball will roll. Different size balls will roll different lengths. Will other things such as a book, a block, a car, etc. roll?



ZIPPY SPONGE PAINTING This paint project will keep your toddler's hands clean. Put paper into a large Ziploc bag. Dip sponge pieces into various colors of paint. Zip the bag closed and let the child squish down on the sponges and see how they paint on the paper.



SAFETY FIRST

SUPERVISION IS KEY

Be sure all materials are over 1" in diameter. Do NOT use Styrofoam or glitter products with young children.

When I play, I am learning...

Dramatic Play—

- To try on different adult roles
- To make decisions
- To exercise my imagination and creativity

Large Motor Play—

- Physical strength, coordination and balance
- To solve problems and “take turns”
- Self confidence as I develop new skills

Fine Motor Play—

- Concepts of color, size and shape
- Form categories of animals, cars, blocks, etc.
- Demonstration of one-to-one correspondence

Sensory Water Play—

- About wet and dry
- Eye-hand coordination as I pour
- Some things sink and some things float

Art Play—

- To develop my imagination and creativity
- Create my own art
- Names of colors and how to combine colors

Blocks, Cars and Trucks Play—

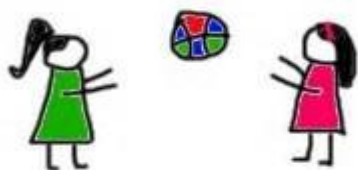
- To create and repeat patterns
- Build structures and knock them down
- Play with peers

Sensory Play Dough Play—

- To exercise my imagination
- Pound, squeeze, cut and roll materials
- Express feelings—pound, pound, pound



~Kay Redfield Jamison



YOUNG EXPLORERS~ Birth to 12 months

Peek-a-Boo Try hiding behind your hands, a diaper or a onesie as you dress your baby. Early on, he may show his pleasure simply by paying close attention. Then he may smile, kick his leg, and make sounds. By 9 months, he may pull your hands away from your face to “find” you.

Sing and Dance Listen to different kinds of music and dance in different ways to see what your baby likes best. Sing a favorite song that has been passed down through your family. Don't worry about the sound of your voice—he loves to hear you.

Play Ball Offer a ball with different colors and textures. Let your baby explore it with all her senses. Encourage her to see what else she can do with it. This will eventually help her learn to roll it, drop it in a box, and take it out again.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS~ 12-24 months

Let's Do It Again...and Again...and Again... Through repetition, toddlers figure out how things fit together and work. They might fill and dump a pail over and over to learn about full and empty and in and out. They may want you to read the same book, and sing the same song over and over. This kind of repetition helps children to know what to expect.

Name That Tune Now that your child can imitate words and melodies, he'll love to sing songs and have books read with rhyming words and repeated phrases. See if the child knows the next word to the song by pausing before you sing it or before you read the next part of the story.

Busy Hands Young toddlers love to make things work. They use their hands and fingers for pushing buttons, opening boxes, and turning pages. Many children also like to finger paint, color, play with play dough, or squeeze water out of a sponge.

SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES 24 to 36 months

Say It With Music “Statue,” “Freeze,” and “Hokey-Pokey” are fun musical games. They offer opportunities to listen and follow directions. They also teach about words and sounds and allow children to move and exercise their bodies.

Quiet Play A child's play doesn't always have to be full of action. Looking at books, listening to stories, and drawing pictures all build your child's imagination and language skills. Many children enjoy playing with sand, mud, or dough. These activities can be soothing and relaxing.

Act It Out Encourage fantasy play by providing dress-up clothes and other props. Use items like hats, scarves, backpacks, bowls and containers, music makers, and whatever else you and your child can find. Join the fun. When you get involved, you can help her expand on her

SPACES FOR PLAY...Promoting Infant Toddler Development

COZY/BOOK

Emotional-A space to escape the hustle and bustle of the classroom

Social-Looking at books together to strengthen the caregiver child relationship

Motor-Practice turning pages in a book enhances fine motor development

Language-Pre-literacy activities enhance vocabulary development and model language

Cognitive-Learn about the world through books; explore independently

MANIPULATIVES (Fine Motor)

Emotional-Experience joy, surprise, pleasure and frustration as they make discoveries

Social-Imitate others behaviors and practice skills

Motor-Gross motor-reaching toys; Fine motor-grasping, turning and stacking toys

Language-Learn language and enhanced/extended vocabulary through interactions

Cognitive-Discoveries such as cause and effect and how things take up space

DRAMA

Emotional-Pretending is a chance to act out emotions and fears

Social-Strengthened interactions with caregiver and build peer relationships

Motor-Strengthen of muscle development, balance and coordination

Language-Teachers expand vocabulary giving words for things the child is trying to do

Cognitive-Pretend play and authentic opportunities for problem solving

BLOCK

Emotional-Pride gained when successfully building with blocks and knocking them down

Social-Interacting with caregivers and peers in building

Motor-Building and stacking different sized blocks develops fine and gross motor skills

Language-Learn new vocabulary as the teacher extends language

Cognitive-Early math skills such as identifying shapes, colors and position (on top, etc.)

ART

Emotional-Creation and appreciation of beauty

Social-Support expression as children show the caregiver what they did

Motor-Practice with drawing materials, painting and playing with play dough

Language-Encourage to use words as they create and describe feelings and textures

Cognitive-Cause and effect using a variety of art media; discussion of color and shape

SENSORY/SCIENCE

Emotional-Expression of likes and dislikes; preferences

Social-Communication with caregiver and peers when engaged in experiences

Motor-Reaching and manipulating new materials enhance fine and gross motor skills

Language-Prompts to communicate discoveries and feelings

Cognitive-Experience a variety of textures, sizes and shapes

MUSIC

Emotional-Variety of music to recognize and label emotions

Social-Playing together with caregiver and peers in musical games; playing instruments

Motor-Moving, bouncing, dancing and playing of musical instruments

Language-Song patterns and lyrics build vocabulary

Cognitive-Remembering familiar songs and dance movements

INDOOR ACTIVE

Emotional-Experience a variety of emotions as they learn what their bodies can do

Social-Imitation of actions and approval of caregiver for acceptable behaviors

Motor-Unrestricted movement to facilitate physical challenge and skill development

Language-Increase language as caregivers describe activities and actions

Cognitive-Discoveries of cause and effect and understanding of spatial relationships

OUTDOOR/ACTIVE

Emotional-Pleasure of being outdoors and exploring the natural environment

Social-Skills in turn taking and playing close together

Motor-Repetition and practice of skills such as climbing, running, jumping, etc.

Language-New sounds and sensory experiences provide new vocabulary

Cognitive-Difference between inside and outside and expectations for both



**WHAT CHILDREN
NEED MOST.....**
LOVE Respect to **PLAY**
 to have fun to be seen
TO BE LISTENED TO
 Your presence A hero
 A fostered sense of wonder
LOTS OF HUGS To **PLAY**
 The chance to make mistakes
 Encouragement to try again
 Room to grow **DREAMS**
 To be told **YES!**
 To be trusted Affection
GUIDANCE TO PLAY
 Growing A Jeweled Rose.com

Further Discussion...A Closer Look

“PLAY IS FREELY CHOSEN”

Young children need time to explore and make choices. Individual, small group and limited group activities should be available throughout the program day. Infants and toddlers are not always ready to be engaged in large group activities and can become easily overwhelmed.

“PLAY IS PROCESS ORIENTED”

TRUE: Have the environment set up for free exploration. Don't always show the child the “right” way to play with something. Often toddlers will come up with new, creative ways to use toys and materials.

“IN PLAY, EVERY CHILD CAN BE SUCCESSFUL”

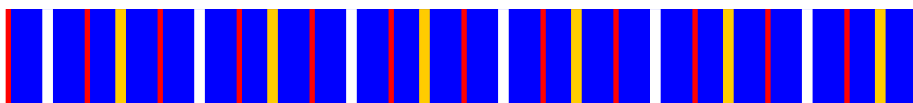
It's ok to watch. This is a stage of play called onlooker play. To start, the child may be more comfortable engaging one-on-one with a caregiver.

“PLAY IS SELF-MOTIVATED”

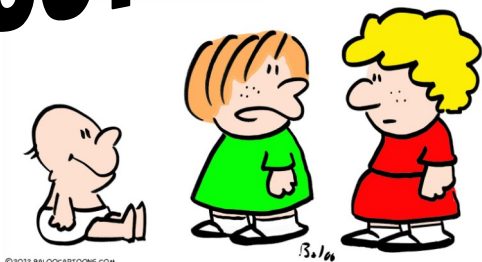
The concern with the reward system is that this should not be the only reason a child participates. This can lead to power struggles when there is no reward given.

“PLAY INVOLVES ACTIVE PARTICIPATION”

Dancing, moving their bodies, climbing, block play, dramatic play, art activities, etc. all engage the child in active play developing physical, cognitive (thinking), language, social and emotional skills.



JUST FOR FUN



"My little brother can't talk yet
— he isn't even on MySpace."

RESOURCES and REFERENCE MATERIALS

ARTICLE *Make the Most of Playtime*, vanderbilt.edu/csefel

ARTICLE *News You Can Use: Why is Play so Important?* Early Head Start March 2010, ehsnrc.org/publications

BOOK *Active Learning for Infants*, Cryer, Harms, Bourland

BOOK *Active Learning for Ones*, Cryer, Harms, Bourland

BOOK *Active Learning for Twos*, Cryer, Harms, Bourland

BOOK *Supporting Play Birth through Age Eight*, Dorothy Justus Sluss

RESOURCE *Focus on ECMH: Importance of Play*

RESOURCE *Head Start Body Start Infant and Toddler Outdoor Play Space Assessment*, www.headstartbodystart.org

RESOURCE *Infant Toddler Materials Guide*, Child Development Research Center, University of South Carolina

RESOURCE *Learning Through Play*, pdesas.org/ocdel

RESOURCE *Play Power: Strategies to Support Learning Through Play-Video Training Series*, www.TeachingStrategies.com

WEBSITE *Activities*, www.toddertoddler.com