

Wondering. Exploring. Figuring it out.



Answers to questions
about play based learning.



Manian
Future Carpenter



Learning Starts with Play. Wondering, exploring, figuring it out – play has a purpose.

It's how children make sense of the world around them and find their place in it.

The best part? Learning through play happens naturally. So find as many opportunities as you can for your child to play. And don't forget to play along yourself.

You'll be amazed at what you will learn together.

that's the
Power
of **Play!**



Q What is “play”?

- Play is an activity that is fun, spontaneous, and open-ended.
- The main requirement for play is imagination.
- There are different types of play, including outdoor play, ‘rough and tumble’ play, pretend play, solitary play.



Q Why is play important?

- Research shows strong links between creative play and language, physical, social/emotional, and cognitive development (play helps to develop the “whole” child).
- Play stimulates healthy brain development.
- During play, children learn about the world in which they live, they can explore, create, imagine and figure things out!
- Play is a powerful tool for building self-control and self-regulation which has been shown to be a predictor of optimal early learning and future success in life.



Q What does play look like?

- Play lays the groundwork for later success in reading, writing, mathematics and science.
- Play can be loud or quiet, active or passive, with groups or alone.
- Of course children love to play with other children but there are also types of play that don't exactly look like what we think of when we think of play. For example,
 - “Onlooker play” happens when a child watches other children at play, perhaps looking at an opportunity to join in or just getting to know how other children play.

- “Parallel play” happens when two children are playing side by side, each engrossed in their own activity, paying no attention to what the other is doing.
- “Solitary play” is when a child plays alone, completely caught up in his or her own little world of imagination.
- There is value in each of these types of play.
- Play can be quite serious, as in the construction of an intricate block building, or it can be silly like banging on the pots and pans to make a “beautiful” noise.
- Play is done for its own sake – not for a reward of any kind or because one is directed to do it. Although children learn through play – they don’t necessarily play to learn. They play because they want to and because it is interesting, challenging and fun.
- Play is what happens when children are provided with the time, the space, the materials and the support of an encouraging and attentive adult.



Q How does play help my child learn?

- Play nurtures the development of skills such as literacy and numeracy in ways that are meaningful to the child.
- Play helps children develop good interpersonal skills and helps children learn to problem-solve, negotiate conflicts and think for themselves.
- When children play they integrate all types of learning and development. Some examples:
 - Playing with blocks lays the foundation for logical mathematical thinking, scientific reasoning and cognitive problem solving, and helps children improve their visual memory;

- When children play with blocks they learn to match, classify and sort by shape and size, which is an important skill for many types of learning;
- When children draw pictures they are learning to use symbols to represent their ideas, which is a necessary skill for learning to read and write;
- When children string beads they are improving their eye-hand coordination, which is needed for learning to write;
- When children mix two colours of paint together to make another colour, they are developing an understanding of cause and effect;
- When children pretend-play together, they are improving their language skills, social skills, and they are developing an understanding of social expectations, including empathy;
- Active play helps develop gross motor skills, fine motor skills, agility, coordination and balance; and,
- Play allows children to use their imaginations to explore and discover their world.



Q Children already play, don't they?

- There has been a decline in opportunities for unstructured play.
- Many children are engaged in adult-directed, scheduled activities (e.g., sports activities, music, dance) and have very little downtime to spend “just playing” by using their imagination e.g., building forts, playing outside.
- Many children have a lot of daily “screen time” (e.g., cartoons, DVDs, computers, electronic games) starting at an early age, meaning that more time is spent in front of a screen than engaged in physical or imaginative play.
- Increased attention to academics and enrichment activities has reduced the opportunities for play.



Q How can I incorporate play into my busy day?

- Many competing demands find most parents at a loss for ways to build play time into their child's day.
- Many children are overscheduled in activities outside the home.
- Play can be built into everyday routines and activities:
 - Play games in the car (e.g., 'I Spy' and other games involving license plates, signs, and colors of cars);
 - Have a picnic together in the living room or back yard. You can plan it together – What will we need for the picnic? Where will we go? Who will we invite? (Use your imagination: it can be a picnic on the moon!!!);

- Cook and bake together. This can be messy fun time and provides lots of opportunities for measuring, pouring and mixing ingredients;
- Play games while grocery shopping (e.g., matching games, imagination games to make up ingredients for silly recipes, and give children picture lists to do their own shopping);
- Play games while tidying or cleaning up (e.g., clean up games during tidy up and sorting socks while folding laundry);
- Water play is a fun way to make bath time enjoyable (e.g., mixing, pouring, and measuring with small plastic containers or having a puppet show with animal bath mitts);
- During bedtime routines, you can read books in silly voices or ask children to tell the story with just the pictures;
- Sing songs together and dance together while doing everyday routines and chores (e.g., while making beds, getting dressed, doing the dusting);
- Go outside and kick a ball around, play catch, or visit a playground; and,
- Visit the beach, go on a scavenger hunt or nature walk looking for treasures along the way.



Q How can I support my child's play?

- Play is very important for children's development; parents play an important role as they are their child's best teacher.
- Make play a priority in the home – let children see their parents having fun!
- Parents can help by building time play into children's day, but also allow time for freedom to engage in unstructured play.



- Parents can watch and observe how children play alone and with others. In doing so, they can learn so much about their children's play strengths and needs – do they take turns, follow instructions, play with other children?
- Parents can support children's play by providing appropriate play materials, structuring their environment to encourage play, and introducing new types of play to their children when developmentally appropriate.

Q Where can I find more information on PLAY?

- www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/



To see the latest research about play and learning, you can visit:
gov.nl.ca/edu