

Family Times

NEWSLETTER



A NEWSLETTER FOR ADULTS WITH CHILDREN AGES 5-8

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Play: A Child's Work

Young children learn from play. Play to a child is like work for an adult. With guidance, a child can learn everything he or she needs to know to function in the world. Natural curiosity will lead a child to learn. Play can help prevent discipline problems. Even when children misbehave, they probably are trying to learn something. Play is also an essential link for developing positive relationships between parent and child and between a child and friends.

Play offers a child a means of learning. The foundation of all learning in math and reading comes from play. Play requires finding how things fit together, which is good for building math skills. Toys that require learning the cause and effect of how a toy works teach thinking skills, which can lead to better academic development.



Play contributes further to a child's physical, cognitive, and social development. Active, physical play also helps prevent obesity. The benefits gained from play will help a child become a successful adult.

Play helps children learn:

- how to be a friend
- ways to work out fears and fantasies
- how to understand feelings
- how to share
- about colors, sizes, shapes, and many other things about the world

Play is important because it:

- provides an outlet for positive energy
- keeps children busy in a productive way
- rehearses real-life situations
- strengthens family ties when parents and child play together
- helps children develop positive relationships with peers
- develops concentration, coordination, and confidence in one's ability
- teaches all kinds of skills ranging from solving problems to being creative
- lessens the possibility of discipline problems

Toys: Children's Tools

Children play in many ways with toys, and there is no one or right way to play with them. Toys may be categorized by how they teach. Here are some examples:

- *Physical development:* scooters, pogo sticks, boxes, bicycles
- *Sensory development of touching, hearing, seeing, smelling, or tasting:* water toys, bubble pipes, musical instruments, puzzles
- *Creative work:* clay, paints, crayons, chalk, colored paper, safety scissors, paste
- *Make-believe and social development:* Adult dress-up clothes, cars, airplanes, play-store toys
- *Building:* Blocks, boards, and boxes

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Selecting Toys

Toys do not have to be expensive, but you should be able to answer "yes" to the following questions:

- Are they safe and age-appropriate? Any toy can be unsafe if it is given to the wrong child or is misused. Safe, proper handling needs to be learned at home.
- Are they durable? Will they hold up under normal wear and tear?
- Do they work the way they are supposed to? A child may become frustrated and discouraged and lose interest in a toy that fails to perform.
- Do they hold the child's interest? Toys that can be used for a variety of purposes keep the child's interest the longest.
- Does the child find them fun?
- Do they stimulate creativity? Do the toys offer problem-solving opportunities?
- Do they involve interaction with others? Can more than one person play with a toy at the same time?
- Can they be cleaned easily?
- Are they pleasant to look at? They should be colorful and make pleasant sounds.

You can make wonderful toys from things you have at home. School-age children enjoy games with rules; examples are simple board games and sports like soccer. Children also like art materials, blocks, and music.

Computer Play

Carefully supervise young children when they use a computer. As a parent, carefully select software that will cause the child to be active rather than passive. Good software will challenge a child to think, use the imagination, and allow him or her to experience success.

Parents must closely monitor a child's access to the Internet and limit the amount of time devoted to playing on the computer. Always remember to give your child a variety of experiences as he or she grows.

To Make a Difference

- Provide your child with simple, interesting, fun toys that stimulate the imagination and physical or sensory development.
- Find a safe place for your child to play to help him or her develop confidence and skills.
- Give your child a place to keep toys where he or she can use them.
- Play with your child frequently.
- Provide your child with a variety of play experiences.



The Book Nook

A good book about play to share with your child is:

The Best Way to Play
by Bill Cosby

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