



**PLAYGROUP SA**  
Playing, learning, supporting families

# The Role of Adults in Play

Parents and families are the child's first educator.  
They play a crucial role in children's play...!

- Joining in play builds positive relationships between parent & child, in a fun atmosphere.
- Parents playing with their children promotes opportunities for them to support their children, as they experiment with new skills.
- The most positive reinforcement for children comes from the approval and acknowledgement of a parent.



***"CHILD'S PLAY IS A PARENT'S BUSINESS"***

Australian Childhood Foundation

***"THE MOST IMPORTANT PLAY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN  
IS PLAY WITH PARENTS."***

Every Child Is Important, 2004

***"SETTING THE SCENE; STEPPING AWAY FROM PLAY CAN BE AS  
IMPORTANT AS STEPPING INTO PLAY"***

Nolan et.al, 2006



**Reasons for an adult to enter into children's play include:**

- Safety
- Emotional Support
- Guidance
- Behaviour Guidance
- Motivating
- To present questions
- Challenging
- To query what is taking place
- Giving Knowledge
- To extend the play

Knowing when to enter & exit children's play is critical to meaningful play experiences. Consider what type of playmate you are and how this impacts on children's play.

**Playgroup SA Free Call 1800 171 882**

# What type of Playmate are you?

## Director

Traits of Director Parent are:

- Organiser of play
- Director of the child
- Lead the child and the activity
- Show the child how and what to do
- Stay's close by to monitor the child's progress

## Facilitator

Traits of Facilitator Parent are:

- Centres their attention more on the child than on the play
- Encourages the child to choose an activity and play independently while the adult stands back without getting involved
- An encouraging, supportive and resourceful adult who attends to requests from the child for assistance.

## Observer

Traits of Observer Parent are:

- Adult gives the child the freedom to play alone with little or no interaction
- Adult allows time and space for the child to play independently
- Children create their own play opportunities and socialise freely with other children & adults

## Partner

Traits of Partner Parent are:

- Adult plays with the child as an equal
- Adult and the child take turns initiating and choosing the direction of play
- Adult and child negotiate about ideas and leadership
- Adult becomes a playmate in the real sense, by actively joining in the play

**Ultimately, parents and professionals need to aim for a balanced mix of styles when playing with their children. Each style has its advantages, but only for short periods of time. Adults need to avoid extremes of each style.**