

# State of Play

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF PLAYGROUP SA

ISSUE 2 2014



**PRESCHOOLER  
FUN AT  
PLAYGROUP**

**GREAT  
SCIENCE  
IDEAS**

**OUR TOP TIPS FOR  
TAMING TODDLERS**

**FLIP OVER FOR  
SA KIDS**



# Letter from PLAYGROUP SA

**W**hat a bang the 40th year has started off with! Our Twilight Playgroup to kick off the 40th Birthday of Playgroup SA was just fantastic. Thank you to all the wonderful families, friends, life members, board members and staff who made it a truly wonderful event. A big thank you to life member Jennie Fenton, who wowed the crowd with her amazing puppet show that tracked the first 10 years of Playgroup SA. We look forward to the rest of the year celebrating our 40th birthday. Don't forget that affiliated playgroups can enter our competition to be creative with the number 40 and win great prizes.

We recently sent out our first dedicated *Coordinators* newsletter for the year, and we have received some great feedback about our new service. Keep an eye out for the next edition for more great Playgroup hints, resources and ideas. You'll find some of those ideas, including some simple, fun science activities, in this edition of *State of Play*.

I hope all Playgroupers enjoyed their Easter break and school holidays, and are looking forward to another great term of fun at Playgroup.

**Carley Jones, Executive Officer, Playgroup SA**



# PIONEERS OF PLAY

Toddlers have so much to learn, and getting there isn't always easy. Martina Button shares tips for dealing with the tough times.

WORDS MARTINA BUTTON

**T**antrums, biting, pushing, shoving, kicking and words like 'No! Mine!' are part of the territory when it comes to bringing toddlers together.

These scenarios are familiar to parents at Playgroup, an organisation that has provided a stimulating environment for pre-schoolers for 40 years.

There's lots of noise, lights, colours, resources, activities, big and little people, all with similar temperaments, desires, likes and dislikes. Sometimes this provokes adversity among young pioneers of play.

But at Playgroup, toddler behaviours are just that – behaviours. These behaviours incorporate experimentation, curiosity, adventure, imagination and learning.

But there are definitely times when all of the enquiring, investigating and fun turn sour. That's when you might see kicking, screaming, biting – even thundering to the floor with a

thump and throwing themselves around like a fish out of water.

I remember my son would kneel down on all fours ever so delicately so he wouldn't hurt himself, then headbutt the floor repeatedly. He would do this so dramatically, without any fear of the pain he was inflicting on himself. He walked around with a bruise on his forehead for months!

At times parents and carers find tantrums embarrassing, stressful and frustrating. They might worry their child has a problem, or think their child is the only one that throws spontaneous 'wobblies'. There is no nice way of labelling challenging behaviours. Tantrums are challenging, tiring, loud and complicated. However, we can all be comforted by the fact that most toddlers have 'tantes'. It is a phase – it will pass!

So what can we do in the meantime to get through the flurries of toddler meltdowns? Playgroup SA has some helpful hints to guide us through these toddler frenzies.





# PLAYGROUP SA'S TOP 5 TIPS FOR SURVIVING CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR AT PLAYGROUP

**1** Playgroup-aged children are all at different stages of development and have varying needs. Behaviour, challenging or otherwise, is often a form of communication – so before reacting, ask yourself ‘What is this child trying to tell me?’ More often than not, the child isn’t seeking attention. For example, a child who bites may be trying to tell you that they are either frightened and threatened, teething, want their toy back, hungry, in need of the toilet or even exhausted and needing a cuddle and a rest. A great way to determine what the child is trying to tell you is by making note of what was happening before the event.

**2** Don’t assume that a child’s behaviour is a reflection of poor parenting. Many factors contribute to children’s behaviour. As parents and carers we spend so much time worrying about if we’re doing a good job raising our children – we certainly don’t need others doing it for us too! Playgroup is a safe space for parents and carers and their children, a place without judgment or criticism. Support your fellow Playgroup families by acknowledging that all children have ‘those days’. Create an environment of patience, acceptance and understanding.

**3** Model positive parenting and language. The most developmentally appropriate way to speak with toddlers is to use short, concise, clear and positive messages. Focus on what you want your child to do. For example, if a child is climbing the furniture try, ‘Feet on the ground’ using a calm and encouraging tone. If the child persists in climbing the furniture, they are telling you that they are possibly in an experimental stage of development and basically want to climb and need equipment that better suits their needs, such as a climbing frame. Perhaps go outside and seek a low-lying wall, or even the sandpit barrier, and practice climbing with your toddler. Suggest to the Playgroup

Leader that a climbing frame would be a good piece of equipment to purchase for the next fundraiser. (Try to avoid being frustrated with your toddler, because they are doing exactly what they need to in order to meet a stage of their development).

**4** Ensure there is a regular and flexible routine at Playgroup. Children and adults respond best when they know what is going to happen and what the expectations are. Children find the use of a flexible routine to be very reassuring – it promotes a sense of security for them. Making the Playgroup routine visible for everyone to see is a good idea.

**5** Give positive alternatives to toddlers. This helps with redirecting play to another space of intrigue. Do this before the toddler cracks under the pressure of sharing or frustration. Knowing when to step into toddler play to offer a distraction is a skill all parents and carers should master. For example, if the toddler is in the home corner with another toddler and you can see some nudging and back-turning happening, step into the play with another object for distraction or talk about the play dough across the room. Try ‘Look in the sandpit, I can see a big yellow digger, what can you see?’

Use positive alternatives to ‘NO!’ Give simple explanations to toddlers about why they can or cannot do something. If, for example, a toddler is in the sandpit and is throwing sand in the air and getting it in other children’s eyes, a positive alternative to ‘NO’ is ‘Sand is not for throwing, sand is for digging and making sandcastles.’

Children are toddlers for such a short period of time, so try to remember that all behaviour is communication. Ask yourself ‘What is the behaviour telling me?’ Enjoy this time with your toddler and embrace the challenges with a fresh



perspective of learning opportunities.

Attending Playgroup is an ideal environment for toddlers to master many skills, including social, emotional and cognitive development, fine and gross motor movement, turn taking, language development, friendships and the familiarity of other adults and children. Playgroup emphasises all these developmental learning areas through play, with lots of fun and interactive activities involving teamwork, problem-solving and messy sensory play for everyone. ●

Source: *Top Tips for Surviving Challenging Behaviour at Playgroup*, by Amanda Baldwin

To find your nearest Playgroup contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882. Playgroup welcomes families with children aged birth to five years.

Martina Button is Playgroup SA's Playgroups in Schools (PinS) project officer.

## UNDERSTANDING TODDLERS

- Toddlers have a keen desire for independence.
- Toddlers are highly egocentric.
- Toddlers need routine.
- Toddlers are experiencing the emergence of their incredible imaginations.
- Toddlers are experiencing a critical time for acquiring and developing language.
- Remember, a child's physical, emotional and social development and relationship with the environment are all contributing factors to their behaviour.



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# PRE-SCHOOLERS AT PLAYGROUP

Older children at Playgroup need to be challenged in different ways.

WORDS PLAYGROUP SA TEAM

**T**he change to single yearly intake in schools has prompted a demand for an extension of play ideas and activities for pre-school aged children at Playgroup, given that there are now a larger number of four and five year olds attending.

It can be a challenge to engage all ages of children at playgroup at the same time – whether they are babies, toddlers or pre-schoolers. Your pre-schooler's learning will occur through play, and therefore activities need to be more challenging for this age group.

The principles of challenging and engaging pre-schoolers at Playgroup expand on general playgroup activities and include, but are not limited to, the following ideas:

## Exploring our world

- Teach pre-schoolers about how plants grow and what they need to survive.
- Germinate your own seeds by placing flower cuttings in a glass of water to watch the roots form.
- Make a scarecrow.
- Taste and smell different herbs.
- Add natural items to the craft or play dough table.
- Make a bird feeder.
- Go on a nature walk.

## Painting ideas

- Make shadow prints: paint, fold and open to reveal mirror image.

- Line a box with paper, dip a golf ball in paint and roll it around inside the box.
- Blob paint on paper and use a straw to blow it around.
- Paint using cotton tips, bubble wrap, hands and feet.
- Create a mural to display at Playgroup.

## Other games and ideas

- Set up a making table with art and craft items that are pre-school age appropriate and give them free reign to invent and create like 'big kids'.
- Engage children in games such as Follow the Leader, Simple Simon, Hide and Seek, Hop Scotch and What's the Time, Mr Wolf?

## Obstacle courses

- Encourage gross motor skills and invite children to help set up obstacle courses using everyday objects.
- Step in and out of boxes, climb over cushions, crawl under tables, walk along lines on the ground, create tunnels, balance, hop, tiptoe and use plastic containers filled with sand to use as markers.

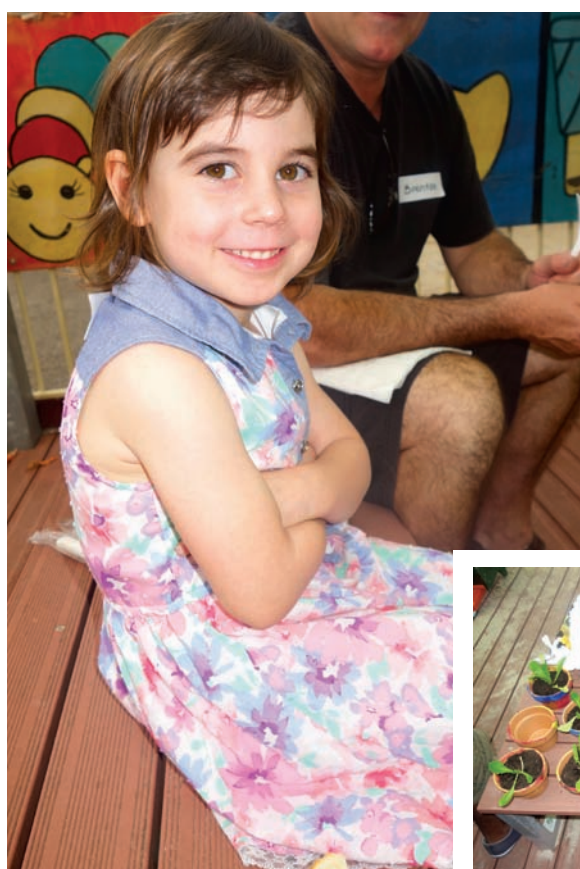
These activities are affordable and accessible to everyone because they use recycled materials found at home and natural materials found outside. ●

*Don't miss out! Call Playgroup SA to register for the Pre-schoolers Workshop on 8 May. For more information on Playgroup SA Courses and Workshops, call 1800 171 882.*



# TWILIGHT PLAYGROUP

Playgroup families celebrated Playgroup's 40th Birthday year with a special Twilight Playgroup at the Prospect head office. Life member Jennie Fenton wowed the crowd with a puppet show that celebrated the first ten years of Playgroup in SA.









# TIME TO EXPERIMENT

## ACTIVITIES FOR HOME AND PLAYGROUP

Science activities are a great way to help children discover their world and a love of learning. Here are some easy activities to try at home and Playgroup.

### Magnifying glasses

You will need:

- Magnifying glasses
- Common and unusual objects

Encourage children to look through the magnifying glass and examine the objects up close. With supervision, help the children to explore their environment, such as under rocks and in the sandpit.

### Magic Painting

You will need:

- Wax crayons (or candles)
- Paper
- Pinch of Edicol vegetable dye
- Plastic container
- Wide paint brush
- Water

Use wax crayons to draw a picture. Mix the Edicol dye with water and paint all over the picture. The wax picture will show through.

### Coloured bubbles

You will need:

- Bubble mixture
- Bubble blowers
- A drop or two of food colouring

Add a drop of food colouring to the bubble mix and blow beautiful coloured bubbles.

### Spray painting

You will need:

- Spray bottle, water
- Edicol vegetable dye (or a couple of drops of food colouring)
- Large piece of paper or cloth
- Aisle or fence to hang paper or cloth

Mix water and dye or food colouring in a spray bottles and help toddlers to spray their masterpiece. When dry, the cloth will have a tie-dye effect. Use the paper as wrapping paper. Or put leaves on the paper and spray over the top to create a silhouette.

Note: Edicol dye will wash out in cold water. ●



## Raise your kids with love and purpose

Join Jodie Benveniste online at [parentwellbeing.com](https://parentwellbeing.com)



Visit [parentwellbeing.com](https://parentwellbeing.com)

## Support

Access to Playgroup SA's Support and Development Officers in person, via email and/or telephone. These workers can provide you with useful resources and materials, Playgroup activities, ideas and more.

## Publications



Four editions per year of our state based publication, the 2-in-1 *State of Play / SA Kids Magazine*. Includes practical, local information about raising children, as well as original articles by experienced journalists, childhood professionals and parents. This mag covers all stages from pregnancy to the teenage years and *State of Play* is specifically targeted to families with 0-5 year olds.

## ePlayNEWS

Subscription to *ePlayNEWS*, Playgroup SA's state based membership newsletter (if an email address is provided) which is distributed six times per year.

## Insurance

Comprehensive public liability & personal accident insurance whilst you and your children are attending an Affiliated Playgroup or Playgroup activity anywhere in rural or metro South Australia.

# Playgroup SA Member Benefits

Along with 4,000 other South Australian family members, enjoy these Playgroup SA Membership benefits!

## Events

Discounted entry into Playgroup SA events including Playgroup @ the Zoo and free special event Playgroups such as Easter, Christmas and Book Week Playgroups.

FREE tickets to the Pregnancy, Baby & Children's Expo (distributed via playgroups).

## ABC Card

A Playgroup Membership Card that is also the Australian Baby Card (valued at \$30) offering you hundreds of discounts online and from numerous South Australian based businesses.



## Training

Discounted Playgroup SA workshops including, Messy Play, Physical Play, Christmas craft and more.

Discounted prices on Accredited Training Courses including Senior First Aid and Child Safe Environments.

## Membership

FREE upgrade to Full Association Membership; This level of membership entitles you to voting rights at Playgroup SA's Annual General Meeting and Special General Meetings and to stand for election on the Board of Management.

**AND the right to attend as many Affiliated Playgroups as you wish!**



# WHAT'S ON 2014

**CRÈCHE AVAILABLE**  
for Playgroup Workshops (not accredited courses)

For all enrolments and/or enquiries, please contact Playgroup SA on 1800 171 882

## PLAYGROUP SA EVENTS 2014

**Book Week Playgroup**  
Thursday 21 August

**PLAYGROUP @ THE ZOO**  
Friday 7 November

**Christmas Playgroup**  
Thursday 4 December

## PLAYGROUP WORKSHOPS 2014

**Coordinators Workshop**  
Thursday 15 May  
Wednesday 13 August  
Thursday 16 October

**Messy Play Workshop**  
Thursday 7 August

**Make and Play Workshop**  
Thursday 4 September

**Preschool Workshop**  
Thursday 8 May

**Christmas Craft Workshop**  
Thursday 6 November

## ACCREDITED COURSES 2014

**Enquire to Playgroup SA for Accredited Course costs**

**Child Safe Environments**  
(Mandated Notification Training)  
Thursday 19 June  
Thursday 11 September  
Thursday 13 November

**Accredited Senior First Aid Course**  
Thursday 18 September

**Performing CPR**  
Available on request

## COMPETITION WINNERS!

**Congratulations to the following Playgroup SA competition winners:**

**Prize:** Family pass (four tickets) and merchandise pack to Disney on Ice presenting Treasure Trove on Saturday 7 June at Adelaide Entertainment Centre, [www.disneyonice.com.au](http://www.disneyonice.com.au)

**Winners:** Anthony Gore, Huntfield Heights; Kasey Spencer-Adams, Parafield Gardens; Kate Ashton, Murray Bridge  
**Competition:** Pregnancy, Baby and Children's Expo, Adelaide

**Prize:** Three nights accommodation in a two-bedroom apartment:  
Modra's Apartments, Tumby Bay

**Winner:** Ahleigh Dennis, Ardtornish Playgroup, St Agnes  
**Competition:** Playgroup SA Early Bird Membership

