



Play

Life is about learning, growing, and developing. From birth to pre-school, much of a child's learning is achieved through play.

The Value of Play

- Play is fun.
- Play comes from within. Children love to play. They are curious and like to explore things and delight in play.
- Play is an important part of healthy development in which children challenge themselves and practice skills.
- Play is enjoyable and open ended.
- During play, the child sets the rules and there is no right or wrong way to play.

Developing Skills

- During play, children practice physical skills and learn about their bodies.
- They learn to use their imagination.
- They learn about their own feelings and about the feelings of others.
- They learn about the world around them using all five senses - touch, taste, smell, sight and sound.

Safety

- Check the play area regularly for dangers and breakages.
- Repair or replace damaged steps, gates, fences and play equipment as soon as possible. Young children are curious and have little or no understanding of danger.
- Ensure power points have safety plugs, cupboards have locks and all electrical equipment and cords are out of reach.
- Lock away dangerous substances like cleaning materials in a child proof cupboard.





The adults role in play

Supervision

At playgroup, adults need to engage and watch over their children at all times. Be nearby to enter into play and assist the child when necessary.

Observe

Carefully observe children at play to discover their favourite playmates and favourite toys. What kind of play and play themes they prefer; what problems they confront in their play.

Be a Role Model

Be playful! Participate in your child's play at appropriate times, use descriptive commenting and positive reinforcement (without intruding on the play time and allow the child time to respond and process what is happening in his/her play.

Encouragement

Be supportive by showing an interest and helping when the child needs help. Encourage rather than direct. Let your child initiate play.

Provide for Play

Provide a safe, interesting place for play (inside and outside, if possible) with accessible storage for toys and equipment. Provide a variety of experiences eg. solitary, social, quiet and active. Conduct regular safety checks on equipment.

Talk

Discussion will increase vocabulary and help language skills. It can enhance pretend play and help the child think about the direction of play. Offer words to describe the activity.

Time

Plan for blocks of time to be available for play and avoid stopping the play if possible. Uninterrupted time will need to increase with their age. Give them plenty of warning when play time is nearing the end.



Introduce new ideas

When a child is bored or out of ideas for play, an older child or adult may be able to stimulate more play by introducing something new eg. a game, cubby building or a story about what the older person did as a child. Think ahead of ways to extend the play that the child is already engaged in eg. add soap suds and an egg beater to water play, etc.