



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.

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

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



Knowing when to enter & exit children's play is critical to meaningful play experiences.



“SETTING THE SCENE;
STEPPING AWAY FROM PLAY
CAN BE AS IMPORTANT AS
STEPPING INTO PLAY”

Nolan et.al, 2006



Consider what type of playmate you are and how this impacts on children's play

What type of Playmate are you?

Director

Traits of a Director. Someone who:

- Is an organiser of play
- Is a director of the child
- Leads the child and the activity
- Shows the child how and what to do
- Stays close by to monitor the child's progress

Facilitator

Traits of a Facilitator. Someone who:

- 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
- Is an encouraging, supportive and resourceful adult who attends to requests from the child for assistance.

Observer

Traits of an Observer. Someone who:

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

Partner

Traits of a Partner. Someone who:

- Plays with the child as an equal
- Takes turns with the child initiating and choosing the direction of play
- Negotiates with the about ideas and leadership
- 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.

