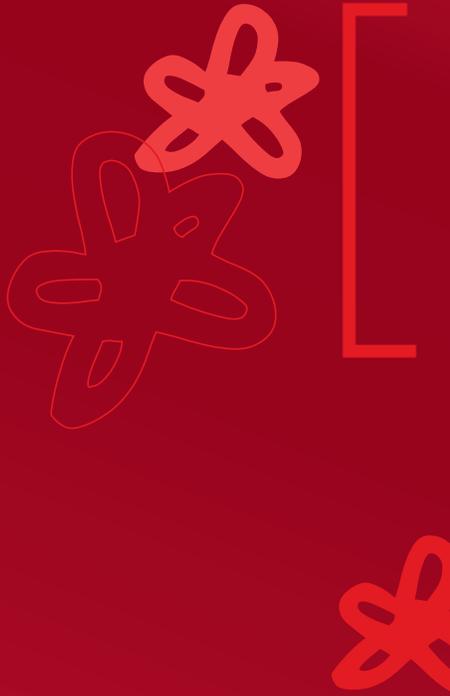


Eyes on



Child's Play

Learning that comes naturally



PARENTS

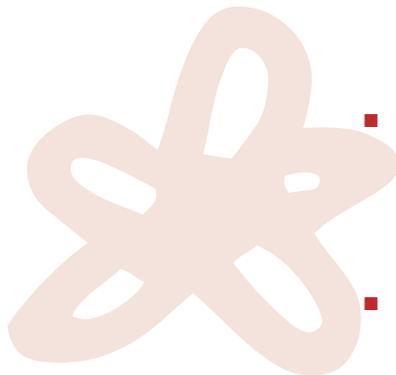


CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Early Childhood Development



“There are three main categories of play: social, cognitive and physical play.”



What do we know?

- Very young children spend at least 20% of their time and energy in play.
- Play is an activity that:
 - your child has fun doing
 - is simple, spontaneous, flexible and has no specific goals
 - is started and then led by your child.
- Children's play provides good opportunities to learn. It builds skills that later help your child to learn to read and write and do math.
- When your child takes part in dramatic play (e.g. playing house, blocks, trains, school), he uses his imagination, storytelling and problem-solving skills. These skills, in turn, help him learn to read, write and communicate verbally.
- When your child pretends by using objects in his play, he learns that symbols such as letters represent a spoken word. For example, when he plays “store” and uses objects such as shopping lists and price tags, he learns that the letters and numbers on these objects have meaning.
- There are three main categories of play: social, cognitive and physical play.
- Your child goes through different levels of **social play** as he grows up:
 - First, he plays by himself (solitary play). This is common at age 2, but continues throughout the preschool years.
 - Then, he plays near children, but doesn't interact with them (parallel play). This is common at ages 2 to 3.
 - Later on, he plays with other children and learns to cooperate and negotiate (group play). This is common at age 3 and older.
- **Cognitive play** uses language and thinking skills and may include pretend. In this type of play, your child may use objects creatively. For example, he may use a banana for a phone, a stick for a wand, or an empty box for a time machine. This kind of play also includes construction play (puzzles, building blocks, etc.).
- **Physical play**, including outdoor play, is important for your child's motor development (strength, endurance, skill), physical health, and his ability to concentrate in school.

Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... interacting with your child during play. It may help him develop language and problem-solving skills and creativity. These skills will later help your child to read and write.

- Help your child develop basic learning skills through simple routines like bedtime stories and pretend play.
- Encourage your child to start and lead play activities.
- Provide your child play time, space and props (dress-up clothes, boxes, etc.) for role play.
- Take your child on outings to stimulate his imagination.

... providing your child with play spaces where there are lots of letters and words (books, posters, signs). This will help him become familiar with letters and words and how they are used.

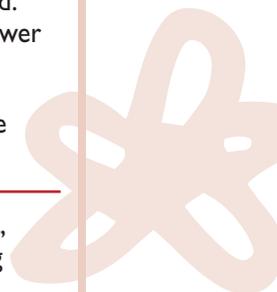
- Organise your child's play space so that he connects words and pictures during pretend play (for a "restaurant," provide him with menus, bills, etc.).

... guiding your child during play if needed.

- Help your child if he is getting too frustrated. For example, lend him a hand if his block tower keeps tumbling.
- Try not to control or structure his play time too much.

... the importance of free play for your child. Stimulating activities do not always mean structured ones.

- Provide your child with paper, crayons, paint, glue, plastic letters and jigsaw puzzles during play time.
- Trust your child to be able to guide his own play and to learn from it.
- Let him play!





Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of child's play, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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