

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

Young children learn best through play. Children need to interact directly with their environment to develop the understanding necessary to learn. Sometimes we may under value the importance of play. When we see children in kindergarten or day care we sometimes say that the children "are just playing".

Children are stimulating all areas of their development when they are playing. For instance, when children are playing with blocks they are learning:

1. Eye-hand coordination, which is very important for writing.
2. By building secure structures - they are learning about balance, foundation etc (Spatial Skills.)
3. Shapes - they are learning about geometry.
4. Colour - differentiate objects.
5. Social skills - they are learning how to share and take turns.
6. Communication - how to explain to their friends and parent what they are doing.

These are just a few of the things that could be happening in your child's mind as they play with blocks.

Think about the many play activities your child does all day long. They are learning many things from these activities.

Children do not need expensive toys to play with, to learn. Children love to play with empty boxes, pots and pans, building forts with chairs and cushions. Children have the ability to turn almost anything into a play activity.

It is important to remember that children like to and need to play with their parents. This is a message that we are trying to make.

Parents - Play - Child Development

- While parents are very busy adults and find it hard to find time to play with their children, it is important to try.
- When parents play with their children they can help not only their child to develop their emerging skills but it also brings enjoyment to both.
- When parents provide children with encouragement their children will continue to try to achieve their task.
- Having good times with the child helps to build a strong relationship with him or her. It is from the foundation of this relationship that the child will go forth and develop other relationship with adults and children.
- Younger children need to play with their parents for a longer period of time. As the children get older they are more able to play on their own or with their friends.
- Many parents have a sense of how children develop but may not be aware of the specifics of development, for 3 reasons. **First**, often parents think that children should be able to achieve tasks, which are actually well beyond their actual age level, and they might become quite angry and assume that the child is misbehaving and not listening. **Secondly**, child development

knowledge is important as parents can assist their children in simple ways by offering age appropriate encouragement to meet their development goals. Thirdly, if parents are aware of how and when children develop certain skills they will be able to determine if their child is developing properly and with this knowledge they can provide appropriate supports to help their child.

Here are some things parents must remember when playing with their child :

- 1. Be on your child's level** - Both physically and mentally. Eye-to-eye contact and non-verbal communication are of vital importance.
- 2. Follow your child's lead** - Children usually know how they like to play. If you take over, your child may lose interest. If you follow their lead and play the way they like, the play will last longer and they will feel good about it.
- 3. Children need encouragement** - When you play with your child it develops into a positive experience for both of you, and helps to develop a positive relationship.
- 4. Match your child's ability to the play** - It is good to offer your children challenges in their play, but it is important not to offer them challenges which are developmentally too advanced. This will frustrate them and quickly end the play and thereby make them feel inadequate.