

Play is Important

Giving a child the opportunity, time, and space to play helps to foster many important life skills. Engaging in play allows a child to explore different interests, passions, and talents. Play is a wonderful educational tool that helps prepare them for life experiences.



Tips to Make the Most of Play Time

Limit screen time

Promote outdoor play

Allow for child to make mistakes

Give child free time to play outside of school and organized activities

Let child make choices about games, activities, and toys

Encourage use of imagination

Offer new challenges if child is bored or help if child is frustrated

Provide encouragement and support

Play Builds Skills for a Lifetime

Knowing what to do when no one is directing you

Problem solving

Creativity and imagination

Interacting with others and negotiating

Resilience

Flexibility and adaptability

Willingness to take risks and try different scenarios

Processing emotions

Understanding social situations

Discovering interests

0-6 Months

- Show baby interesting objects such as a brightly colored mobile or toy
- Talk to baby often to familiarize baby with your voice, respond when they coo and babble
- Place baby in different positions so they can see the world from different angles
- Let baby bring objects to mouth to explore and experience new textures
- Vary facial expressions and gestures so baby has the opportunity to imitate them
- Use a mirror or favorite toy to help your baby engage in and enjoy Tummy Time

7-12 Months

- Play peek-a-boo
- Use a mirror to show faces to baby
- Provide baby with a safe environment to crawl and explore
- Place baby in a variety of positions such as on tummy, side, etc.
- Give baby opportunities to learn actions have effects, e.g. when they drop a toy and it falls to the ground
- Expose baby to a variety of age appropriate toys, e.g. balls, shape sorters, music toys, or common household items like pots and spoons .

1-3 Years

- Allow child to spend time with objects and toys they enjoy
- Give child crayons or markers so they can practice scribbling
- Encourage child to interact with peers
- Help child explore their body through different movements, e.g. walking, jumping, and standing on one leg
- Provide opportunities to create make-believe situations with objects, e.g. pretending to drink out of empty cup
- Respond when child speaks, answer questions, and provide verbal encouragement .

- Provide opportunities for child to sing, dance, and try a variety of movements, e.g. hopping, swinging, climbing, and doing somersaults
- Tell stories to child and ask them questions about what they remember
- Give child time and space to act out imaginary scenes, roles, and activities
- Allow child to move between make-believe games and reality e.g. playing house and helping you with chores
- Schedule time for child to interact with friends to practice socializing and building friendships .