



The Importance of Play

Play is essential to healthy child development. For an activity to be regarded as play it should be freely chosen by the child and the child should want to do the activity for no other reason than because it is fun.

Play is further described by the following characteristics:

- Freedom of choice
- Personal enjoyment
- Focuses on the activity rather than outcome
- Self-directed
- Self-selected
- Open ended
- Voluntary
- Enjoyable
- Flexible
- Motivating
- Individual or group

Play fosters a child's physical, socio-emotional, intellectual and spiritual development. As children play, their muscles grow strong, and they develop positive social and life skills such as; learning to share, turn taking, making choices and understanding the feelings of others. Through play, children increase their vocabulary and improve language and communication skills.

Play helps children learn who they are, what they can do, and allows them to explore and practice how the world works. It helps increase children's concentration and cooperation with others.

In order for this to occur, children need:

- To play indoors and outdoors with room to run, jump, and climb
- Opportunities to touch objects with different textures; squish their hands in mud, sand, and play dough
- A chance to build things with blocks and boxes, and to make forts with blankets and pillows
- Opportunities to pretend and be creative with everyday items for dress-up and role play to explore and express their feelings
- A chance to spend time on activities like drawing, reading, cutting, painting and doing puzzles that develop their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and attention span