

## Learning Through Inquiry and Play

Play is essential for children's learning. It helps them develop the skills they will use for the rest of their lives. Play gives children opportunities to explore the world in which they live and nurtures healthy brain development.

Luckily, play comes naturally to children – they do it every day without even thinking about it!

There are many different types of play!

**Solitary  
Play**

**Play with  
Peers**

**Physical  
Play**

**Pretend  
Play**

**Creative  
Play**



And don't forget:

- Play can be loud or quiet
- Play can be serious or silly
- Play can happen alone or with others
- Play can be indoors or outdoors

## Encouraging Play at Home

There are lots of things parents can do to encourage creative and fruitful play time at home.

- Model play for your child – let him or her see you having fun.
- Make sure your child has time for free play built into his or her daily routines.
- Encourage lots of play dates with other children.
- Observe your child while he or she is playing with other children to get an idea of what kinds of things he or she enjoys while playing.
- Ensure your child has a variety of different types of materials to play with.
- Make sure your child has a designated space for play, but encourage him or her to explore playing in a variety of different safe, supervised environments.

## Activities to Encourage Learning through Play

Playing along with your child is one of the most important things that you can do to support your child's development and learning. Plus you get to have fun together! There are so many ways you can include play in the everyday moments you share with your child.

- Start a collection of dress up cloths and props that can be used to encourage pretend play.
- You can also enrich pretend play by spending time visiting different buildings and occupations in your community (for example: doctor's office, post office, construction sites).
- Make some homemade puppets and create a stage out of a cardboard box.
- Play simple card games and board games together.



- Provide a variety of craft materials for your child to be creative.
- Next time you go to grocery store, bring a store flyer with you and help your child match up pictures to items on the shelf.
- Play restaurant. Take turns being the chef, waiter, and the diner.
- Let your child help you prepare simple recipes. Allow your child to practice pouring and stirring. Let him or her explore the textures of different cooking items, such as rice, beans, and flour.
- Sing and dance together to different types of music.
- Spend time playing outdoors in different weather (just make sure to dress appropriately!). See what different games and activities you can do in different types of weather.
- Use building blocks to see how high a tower you can make together. Then practice matching up blocks of the same size or colour.



Guidance from enthusiastic and supportive adults greatly enhances children's play, but children also benefit from unstructured play time without adult participation. Find a balance that works for your child between guided and independent play.