



## PRESCHOOL

# The Importance of Play

### Things Every Parent Should Know About Play and Its Importance (NAEYC)

1. Children learn through their play. Do not underestimate the value of play. Children learn and develop:
  - cognitive skills – like math and problem solving in a pretend grocery store
  - physical abilities – like balancing blocks and running on the playground
  - new vocabulary – like the words they need to play with toy dinosaurs
  - social skills – like playing together in a pretend car wash
  - literacy skills – like creating a menu for a pretend restaurant
2. Play is healthy. Play helps children grow strong and healthy. It also counteracts obesity issues facing many children today.
3. Play reduces stress. Play helps your children grow emotionally. It is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.
4. Play and learning go hand-in-hand. They are not separate activities. They are intertwined. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab. Play is the child's lab.
5. Play outside. Remember your own outdoor experiences of building forts, playing on the beach, sledding in the winter, or playing with other children in the neighborhood. Make sure your children create outdoor memories too.
6. Play is a child's context for learning. Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas during play. It gives them a place and a time for learning that cannot be achieved through completing a worksheet. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, set prices, take orders, and make out checks. Play provides rich learning opportunities and leads to children's success and self-esteem.

### Tail Game

You need at least two people to play this game. Each player needs a piece of fabric or material that can be tucked into the back of their pants. Players run in the backyard and try to pull each other's tail. Tails must be visible and attainable. If your tail is pulled, you are eliminated.

\*Activities should be done under the supervision of an adult or older sibling.

Please see below for some additional activities that you could try with your child.



## Chalk Obstacle Course

Using sidewalk chalk, have children draw their own obstacle courses in a big outside place. Talk about a starting point and an ending point. Create different courses by drawing lines or circles to jump or hop backwards or forwards to. Try making a straight line to walk on like a balance beam. Once everything is set up, use a timer to challenge them when completing the course. For younger children, create different lines (straight, curvy, wiggly) from point A to point B as if they are walking a tight rope.

## Bake a Mud Pie

While taking walks or exploring in your backyard, begin collecting leaves, sticks, and other debris that can be used to decorate a mud pie. Playing in the dirt with your hands uses your tactile sense and gives you a chance to be creative and use your imagination. Use an old bowl, pie tin, or any plastic container (that maybe can be thrown) to make your mud pie. Once the pie is made, decorate it with the best nature has to offer!

## Molding Shapes

Encourage your child to mold and explore dough while you describe the shapes she makes. Your child will begin to connect the shapes she feels with her hands with the shape words she hears you say.

## Rules to Grow On

Together make one or two rules that grant your child new privileges and establish a few limits. By making and following rules, your child will begin to learn that independence is based on responsibility.

## Match and Name Pictures

Mix up pairs of identical pictures and ask your child to find matches and name them. Your child will learn to recognize which pictures are the same and may say the name of each of them. Take it a step further and let your child look for one matching pair among several pictures of the same kind of thing, for example, among several pictures of cars. Your child will begin to notice which pictures are nearly alike and which are exactly alike.

## Packing My Own Picnic

Invite your child to pack a special picnic lunch and decide what to include. Packing a picnic allows your child to act independently and learn from his choices. Go outside, sit under a tree, and enjoy your picnic. Talk to your child about his choices of food and what he liked best about making it himself.

## Retelling the Story

Share a short, original story with your child that she can retell to a puppet or a friend. This gives your child practice in recalling the main points of a story and prepares her to remember main ideas later when she learns to read.

## My Favorite Things

Help your child become aware of her favorite things by asking questions that prompt her to think about her own opinions. Your child will learn that her ideas tell information about herself and are interesting to other people.

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