



SCHOOL AGE

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.

Nature's Color Match

Try matching nature's colors to paint chips. On your next family trip to Home Depot or Menards, take some paint chips, punch a hole at the top of each, and slide them onto a binder ring. (If you do not have paint chips, you can always use color crayons or markers.) Then it is off to explore! Take notes, take pictures, compare the variety of things you find in nature, and sort into the different colors.

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



Action Figure Float

This activity will teach trial-and-error plus have your child participate in a science activity. Have your child collect a variety of toys, action figures, and other household items to do an experiment with. Prior to putting the item in a bin filled with water, have your child guess whether or not the item will float. Put the item in the water and experiment if it will float or not. Do this with a number of items. After determining if it will float or not, put the item in a pile of float or not float. After your child has done six or seven items, look at what each item in the pile has in common. Ask your child, 'why do you think it floated?' 'Why do you think it did not float?'. Continue the experiment as long as you have your child's interest.

Virtual Games With Loved Ones

We are all missing our family and friends during this pandemic. Ask your child if there is an activity that they would like to play with Grandpa or Grandma, a friend, or anyone that they currently cannot visit. Maybe you want to play checkers with your cousin? Maybe you want to cook a meal that Grandma makes. Help your child set up a Zoom call, Facetime, or another communication app so your child can interact with others from afar. While we want to limit the use of electronics, setting up a play date is something to look forward to, a new learning experience, and a great way to spend time with others your child misses!

Explore the Arts

If you have small boxes, have your children draw windows, doors, and other things to make them look like buildings.

Using the small boxes, have your child create her own neighborhood, all while using her imagination. Invite your child to draw a map of the neighborhood by plotting how houses and apartments look when standing in different locations.

Games to Play in the Car

- **I Spy** – One of the players sees something and says, "I spy.... something green", finishing with a clue. The other players look around trying to guess the mysterious object in question.
- **License Plate Game** – Look at the license plate on the cars near you and try to find one from each state. Have an older family member write down the states to see if you can find all 50!
- **Alphabet Race** – Write the alphabet on a piece of paper. Have the children look around for things that start with each letter. Who can name 26 items first!
- **20 Questions** – One traveler should think of an animal, person, or place without saying it aloud. The other players ask 'yes' or 'no' questions, up to 20 per each round, trying to guess who or what it is. The player who has the most correct guesses after several rounds wins.
- **Broken Telephone** – Whisper a message in one child's ear and ask to pass the message to the child next to him or her. The message must pass from one child to another until the last child whispers it back into your ear. Reveal the message that you told the first child and compare it with the one you heard from the last child.