



TODDLER

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.

Play Ideas for Toddlers

Active Play

- Build with blocks and knock them down.
- Play with action toys to push and pull.
- Play with toys that let them play grown-up like telephones, tool sets, and dish sets.
- Play outdoors with balls or just go exploring.
- Make music with toy instruments.

*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.



- Play simple games like Hide and Seek. Hide so child can see part of you.
- Walk around the house looking for everything that is a particular color or shape.

Quiet Play

- Play with soft stuffed animals.
- Sing children's songs and finger games like Itsy-Bitsy Spider.

Ziploc Painting

For a super easy cleanup, put some paint in a Ziploc bag. Make sure it is sealed and taped closed, then give it to your toddler. As he squishes and pokes the bag, the paint will move around in different and interesting ways. This helps your toddler's vision and motor skills.

Dancing

Have a dance party with your toddler. Put on some upbeat music and dance around the house or outside. This helps your toddler's coordination and balance, and it increases creativity.

Exploring 'Guitar'

Put a few rubber bands of different sizes around a thin box to create a guitar. Let your toddler use her fingers to strum the rubber bands and make different sounds. This helps your toddler learn to use just one finger and strum a specific band. It also helps with fine motor, listening, and visual skills.

Contact Paper

Tape some contact paper (sticky side out) to your wall or window. Give your toddler a few different objects like cotton balls that he can use to throw or place onto the contact paper and watch them stick.

Pom-Pom Push

Cut holes into a lid on a box and have your toddler push pom-poms through the holes. Different sized holes can create new challenges. Some she can drop; others she will have to push through. *Supervise your child during this activity. This activity helps to develop fine motor skills, visual skills, and sense of touch.

Rampin' Up

Create a ramp. Let your toddler roll different objects down it to learn about how gravity works. This helps your child develop the ability to use his eyes to track objects and to take turns (if with peers).

Search Out

Get brightly colored objects, like bouncy balls, and place them around the living room. Do not make them too hard to find though. Let your toddler walk around and try to find them. Your toddler can count them out as she finds them. This helps your child develop visual and language skills.

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

