



Wee Learn

Wee Learners
(4 - 5 years):
Block Play Anyone?



It's universal, and it's powerful: Toy blocks and other construction toys can change the way kids think. Building projects stimulate creativity, and sharpen crucial skills. Exploring with blocks also nurtures an understanding for math, science, language and dramatic play. Whether the shapes are wooden, coloured, snap-together or boxes, blocks will enhance your child's learning activities.

Math. Since blocks come in many shapes, sizes and colors, they are the perfect manipulative to use when teaching basic mathematical concepts. To encourage your child to learn math skills through block play, compare and contrast the attributes of each piece. For example, comment on the amount of sides they have, or sort them by color, size and shape.

Science. Cause and effect, hypothesis and experimentation are some of the scientific lessons you can introduce to your preschooler by using blocks. As she explores with different shapes, ask questions. "Which block is heavier?" "If I add one more block to this tower, will it fall down?" Investigate each answer thoroughly alongside your child, letting her lead the way while experimenting using trial and error. Soon, she will become familiar with balance, weight, spatial awareness and gravity through exciting hands-on play.

Language. When playing with blocks, children come across new experiences with each tower, house and railroad they build. Your child is learning to develop sophisticated use of language, stringing sentences together using larger vocabulary and in-depth thought processes. Show interest in your child's construction by asking questions about the design. Encourage her to use adjectives such as "sturdy," as opposed to simpler words like "big" and "strong." Asking open-ended questions about your child's block play may inspire her to have new ideas, as well as nurture confidence in creativity.

Creativity. The open-ended nature of block play naturally lends itself to playing a key role in dramatic play activities. Creating a zoo, building a space ship or designing a castle are ideas your preschooler can bring to life using blocks. Give your child a pretend scenario to work with and ask her to create a block structure that represents the given story. Encourage your child to carry, stack, bridge, pile and balance the blocks to achieve her goal. You can also add homemade materials to the mix. Including boxes, paper, crayons, a camera and costumes will enrich her block experience, as well as encourage expansion of the imagination.

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