

Play

Play builds so many of the skills we target every day with our preschoolers. Play is an opportunity to work on social skills, attention and engagement, develop language and communication skills, build persistence and problem-solving skills, as well as fine and gross motor skills. Through play, children learn about the world around them.

Here are some tips for making the most out of your playtime with your child:

Follow the child's lead:

Allow your child to pick the activity, toy, or game and direct the play. Hold back in taking over the play.

Allow your child to have control over the play, and allow them to problem solve difficulties they encounter in play.

Allow your child to make a mess! It can be cleaned up later

Use preferred objects, toys, and activities to gain and maintain your child's attention and to expand on learning.

Be attentive in your play – no cell phones and no television.

Narrate your child's play as you play with them:

Talk about what your child is doing in their play (i.e., "you're rolling the car up the ramp," "you made a big tower with the red and blue blocks," etc.). This narration during play builds your child's vocabulary through exposure to language, helps in the teaching of concepts, and provides your child with lots of positive attention.

Try to avoid asking questions to your child in their play (e.g., "what color is this block?" or "how many cars do you see?"). This takes the power of the play from the child back to the adult, and places a demand on the child to answer the question. Instead, comment on what you see (e.g., "the block is blue" or "you have ten cars on the floor.")

Model skills for your child:

During play, model what you would like your child to learn: manners, social skills, empathy, waiting for a turn etc. Children learn by imitating what they see.

Praise your child during the play:

Catch your child doing positive things like waiting, sharing, taking turns, being patient, staying calm, and using their imagination.

Be specific when you give your child praise, telling your child exactly what they did (e.g., “wow, you put those puzzle pieces in all by yourself!” or “I am so proud of you for staying calm when your tower fell.”)

Praise their small achievements! Don't wait for perfection.

And most of all HAVE FUN!

Be animated in your play – use your tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions to heighten engagement with your child.

Try to enjoy this time with your child. Time spent playing together strengthens the bond between the child and their caregiver.

"Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." - Benjamin Franklin

How to Play

DO

- Follow their lead
- Give them time
- Be an attentive and appreciative audience
- Provide praise and encourage ideas
- Use descriptive commenting
- Imitate their play and language
- HAVE FUN!

DON'T

- Don't structure, organize, impose your own ideas
- Don't move too fast
- Don't compete or become involved in your own play
- Don't criticize or correct
- Don't ask too many questions