

THE POWER OF PLAY

**Daniella Jernick
School Social Worker
Early Childhood Advisory Council**



THINK ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD

Play promotes development of skills:

1. **Social-emotional**
2. **Cognitive**
3. **Self-regulation**
4. **Language**

These are important for executive functioning and the development of a pro social brain. Playtime is an opportunity to nurture safe and stable relationships with caregivers. All children need this in order to thrive.

PLAYTIME!

- **Control**
 - In a world where they're often told what to do, play offers an opportunity for children to be creative and take the lead; it enables decision making
- **Learning**
 - Making sense of the world
 - Processing information
 - Working through things
- **Social interactions**
 - Promotes interactions both with peers and adults
 - Communication

PLAY IS THE LANGUAGE OF A CHILD

PLAY IS ESSENTIAL FOR PRESCHOOLER DEVELOPMENT

Different kinds of play help preschoolers develop and learn in many different ways:

- **Dramatic and pretend play**
- **Messy play**
- **Physical play**
- **Songs, books, riddles and silly rhymes**
- **Sorting games**
- **Outdoor play**
- **Simple board games**
- **Rough-and-tumble play**



The 6 Stages of Play

Unoccupied Play

0-3 months

When baby is making movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves.



Solitary Play

0-2 years

When a child plays alone and are not interested in playing with others quite yet.



Spectator/Onlooker Behavior

2 years

When a child watches and observes other children playing but will not play with them.



Parallel Play

2+ years

When a child plays alongside or near to others but does not play with them.



Associate Play

3-4 years

When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not much cooperation required.
For example, kids playing on the playground but doing different things.



Cooperative Play

4+ years

When a child plays with others and has interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing.



- By **3 to 4 years**, a child is much more interested in playing with other children and making up games and rules together. They might be better at sharing and taking turns, but they'll still need your support and encouragement.
- At **5 years**, children are much more aware of their place in the world and are eager to fit in with other children. In general, your child wants to follow the rules at home or school.
- Around this age, preschoolers understand that other people have feelings too, and they're beginning to develop empathy. This helps with preschooler friendships.

PRESCHOOL PLAY

child-led ~~=~~ child-run

child-led

- ✓ Valuing connection over compliance
- ✓ Setting limits and holding boundaries
- ✓ Sharing curiosities and joys with the child
- ✓ Joining in with a child's ideas
- ✓ Including a child's interests & strengths
- ✓ Adding structure within child's ideas

child-run

Child gets whatever they want ✗
No adult support or plans ✗
No boundaries, limits, or rules ✗

@creativeconnectionspsds

Child-led therapy is so commonly misunderstood! It doesn't mean unstructured limitless play...

Following a child's lead DOES mean:

- ★ valuing connections over compliance
- ★ setting limits and holding boundaries
- ★ sharing curiosities and joys with child
- ★ joining in with a child's interest
- ★ including interests and strengths
- ★ adding structure to a child's ideas

It's amazing what can happen when we let kids lead!

Build a sense of self-direction and self-confidence in your child

- Allow your child to receive focused attention from you without having to misbehave to get it
- Strengthen your parent-child bond
- Help you practice parenting skills
- Foster child language and social development

PARENTS CAN PLAY TOO!

PRIDE skills

P- labeled praise

R- reflections

I- Imitate

D- Behavior descriptions

E- enthusiasm/ enjoyment

CHILD CENTERED PLAY

How you can help:

1. Choose age-appropriate apps, games and other media.
2. Use screens with your child.
3. Encourage your child to have healthy screen posture.
4. Help your child manage screen time.



PRESCHOOLER PLAY AND SCREEN TIME

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM OUR PRE-K TEACHERS

“Fosters growth through their imagination so when they're in the kitchen they are a chef and when their by the treasure chest, they're a superhero. It's Food for the imagination”

-Danielle McGuire

“Provides opportunity for kids act out problem solving skills and other lessons they have learned in class in a natural and organic way. Play translates the lesson from the classroom into their own words. Play sparks curiosity.”

- Meagan Saltzman

“Play builds on vocabulary and social/ emotional learning. There's so much room to grow and play can add to their skills and interests and build on their knowledge.”

-Michelle Tucker

“Children explore the world through play. They find inspiration through their surroundings: what they hear and what they see and then make it their own.”

-Maria Roman

“Kids watch and learn through you- let your child help you in the home. Use what you have and teach through imitation and modeling. If you’re cooking, let your child be a part of that. Model language by encouraging your child to imitate sounds.”

-Heather Stetz

“Play builds on their preferences and interests and expands their skillset. If they enjoy playing in the kitchen, they may always play the same way but you can show them new ways to play and build in new skills, and even tie in learning concepts like counting, patterns, and colors.”

-Tiffany Henawi, BCBA

QUOTES ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

<https://www.playgroundequipment.com/42-quotes-on-the-importance-of-play/>

RESOURCES

- <https://www.centerforchildcounseling.org/resources/waystoplay/child-centered-play/>
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/preschoolers/play-learning/getting-play-started/preschoolers-at-play#preschooler-play-why-its-important-nav-title>
- <https://www.seattlechildrens.org/health-safety/keeping-kids-healthy/development/child-directed-play/>