

# Play

## The Importance of Play

For an activity to be regarded as play, it should be chosen freely by the child and the child must want to do the activity for no other reason than because it is fun.

## Value of Play

- Play fosters a child's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development.
- As children play, their brain develops, their muscles grow strong, and they develop good social and life skills such as learning to share, take turns, make choices and understand the feelings of others.
- It helps children learn who they are, what they can do and allows them to explore and practice how the world works.
- Play also helps increase children's concentration and cooperation with others.
- The responsibility of parents is to provide the space, opportunity and tools children need to play.

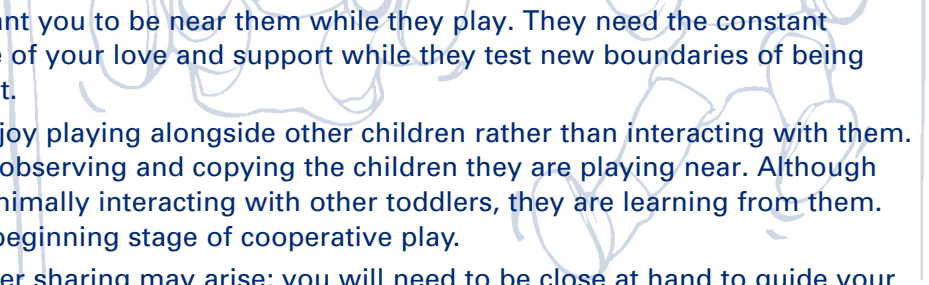


## Children need


- Play indoors and outdoors; they need room to run, jump, and climb
- Opportunities to touch objects with different textures, squish their hands in mud, sand, water and play-dough
- A chance to build things with blocks and boxes; and make forts with blankets and pillows
- Opportunities to pretend and be creative, give them a box of old clothes for dress-up and everyday items to help them role play to explore and express their feelings
- A chance to spend time on quiet activities that develop their fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, and attention spans; activities like reading, coloring, drawing, cutting, gluing, painting, and doing puzzles all help build those skills

*Toys and activities encourage children to learn and thrive. However, it is equally important for children to interact with their parents and with other children while playing.*

## Playing with others

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- Toddlers want you to be near them while they play. They need the constant reassurance of your love and support while they test new boundaries of being independent.
  - Toddlers enjoy playing alongside other children rather than interacting with them. They enjoy observing and copying the children they are playing near. Although they are minimally interacting with other toddlers, they are learning from them. This is the beginning stage of cooperative play.
  - Conflicts over sharing may arise; you will need to be close at hand to guide your toddler in learning this new skill. Typically, children do not begin to share until around 3 years old. Until then, children do not have the thinking skills to understand why they cannot have something when they want it.
  - Preschoolers are becoming more sociable. They are learning to share, take turns and play games with other children. Conflicts are still likely to arise but a parent can guide a child in solving the conflict with their playmate.
  - Preschoolers love using their imaginations and enjoy using make believe or pretend play with other children.
  - Preschoolers are able to express feelings and problem-solve while playing with others at this stage. They also have a much longer attention span and are able to play with others for longer periods of time.

## Create time every day to play

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- It is very important for parents to play with their children. By playing with your child, you create a special bond. You help them solve problems, test new ideas, use their imagination, and increase their vocabulary.

### **Dr. Webster-Stratton, author of *The Incredible Years* provides some guidelines for parents to follow when playing with their children:**

- Follow your child's lead. Let them set the direction and use their ideas.
- Ensure the play is age appropriate – give your child time to learn.
- Let them make the rules – it gives them a sense of independence and competence.
- Praise and encourage your child's ideas – don't criticize or correct their play.
- Engage in role-play and make-believe games.
- Provide descriptive comments instead of asking questions, e.g. *"You put the yellow dog in the truck"* instead of *"What color is the dog? Where is the dog?"*
- Promote independent problem-solving – don't help out too much.
- Reward quiet play with attention to encourage that behaviour.
- Laugh and have fun together everyday.

If you would like more information, contact the Halton Region at 905-825-6000, your local Ontario Early Years Centre or your Family Physician/Pediatrician.