

the Playbook ...



... rules and guidelines to help you make the most of your child's playtime

Play is a child's work. A child's play has benefits that extend far beyond the obvious one: fun! Play stimulates your child's curiosity, creativity, and intellect, which help him to discover and make sense of his world. It allows him to explore and express himself, to learn on his own, control his environment, and connect with others. Best of all, play provides the perfect opportunity to spend time and have fun with your child.

Research shows that the most important factor in a child's early learning is a loving, nurturing relationship with an adult in her life. And playing together is a great way to nurture that bond.

Rules of the Game

By becoming involved in a child's play and taking it seriously, you encourage his imagination and self-esteem.

Following are a few simple "rules" to follow to make sure you and your child are having a good play experience.

Jump right in

Playing with a child from the start helps build the foundation for trusting relationships and helps him become a happy person.

Take a break

Solitary play gives a child time to process everything that she has been doing. Watch. If she is happy, leave her alone. If she seems bored or overstimulated, redirect her activity.

Forget the rules

Encourage a child to explore and "make believe." Playing creatively greatly affects a child's imagination and development.

Think like a child

Add to a child's play experiences by creating imaginative games and new ways to use her toys and safe household objects.

Let a child guide his play

Allowing the child to pick the activity and decide how it's played gives him confidence.

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Fun and easy activities to do at home with your baby and young child ...

Pretend with puppets

Stimulate your child's creativity by entertaining her with finger and hand puppets. She will exercise both her hands and her imagination!

What you can do at home:

For infants, draw faces on your fingers and wiggle them as you make the puppets talk and sing.

For toddlers, make and decorate puppets out of paper bags or old socks.

For preschoolers, perform a puppet show.

Things you may need:

- Pens or markers
- Finger puppets or hand puppets
- Old socks, gloves, paper bags

Invent instruments

Let your child make his own music. Create instruments by combining common household items. His creativity and coordination will improve with each beat.

What you can do at home:

For infants, fill empty water bottles with Cheerios® or dried pasta. Be sure the lid is secured tightly and shake away.

For toddlers, a wooden or plastic spoon becomes a drumstick, and a coffee can becomes a drum. Two pot lids make great cymbals.

For preschoolers, place dried pasta in the middle of two paper plates. Staple the edges of the plates together and decorate with silly faces.

Things you may need:

- Empty plastic bottles
- Cheerios, dried pasta
- Spoons, pots, plastic bowls, paper plates

Hide-and-seek

Your child will discover more than just a hidden smile or toy with simple games of hide-and-seek or peek-a-boo. Watch his communication and sense of touch develop as he watches his favorite objects appear and disappear.

What you can do at home:

For infants, play peek-a-boo with a favorite stuffed animal, toy, or your hands.

For toddlers, put small toys or household objects in the pillowcase and ask the child to take out the object you name. As her vocabulary increases, ask her to take out an object and name it. Or, place the objects on the floor and then take one away. Ask the child, "What's missing?"

For preschoolers, have the child look for specific objects or shapes around the house. For example, ask your child, "How many circles can you find?" Initiate a game of "I Spy ..." and take turns "spying" and identifying the object.

Things you need:

- Pillowcase
- Small toys or household items

Born LearningSM is a public engagement campaign helping parents, caregivers and communities create early learning opportunities for young children. Designed to support you in your critical role as a child's first teacher, Born Learning educational materials are made available through the efforts of United Way, United Way Success By 6 and Civitas. For more information, visit us online at www.bornlearning.org.

