



Six Kinds of Play



1. Exploratory play
Children investigate materials.
2. Constructive play
Children manipulate materials with a specific plan.
3. Dramatic play
Children take on roles and pretend to be or do something different from reality. In dramatic play children share ideas, use objects symbolically to stand for other objects, and use language to communicate ideas and solve problems. Research shows that dramatic play strongly supports literacy development.
4. Games with rules
This type of play is related to understanding that literacy is based on rules. Board games also develop important skills such as 1 to 1 correspondence and counting skills; and social skills such as taking turns and being a good loser.
5. Physical play
Develops crucial motor skills, relieves stress and enhances brain function by increasing the amount of oxygen to the brain.
6. Language play
Goofing around with words and sounds helps develop consciousness of sounds (phonemic awareness) that is an important factor in learning to read.

Children benefit from all these types of play, but not all play is productive. Adults need to be actively involved to support play. Adults can:

- comment from the side
- make suggestions from the side
- step in to assist or model
- back out as soon as things get on track
- take care not to take over children's play

