

Developmental Play Activity Ideas



Why children need to play

Children at play learn how to:

-Make a plan and follow through e.g. "I want to draw my family. Who will I put in my picture?"

-Learn from trial and error, using imagination and problem-solving skills e.g. "My tall tower fell down! Maybe you can help build it up again."

Apply concepts of quantity, science and movement to real life e.g. "I like these big seeds. How many will I need to cover this part of my picture?"

-Reason in a logical, analytical manner by acting on objects e.g. "There are still some pieces missing in this puzzle. Which ones might fit?"

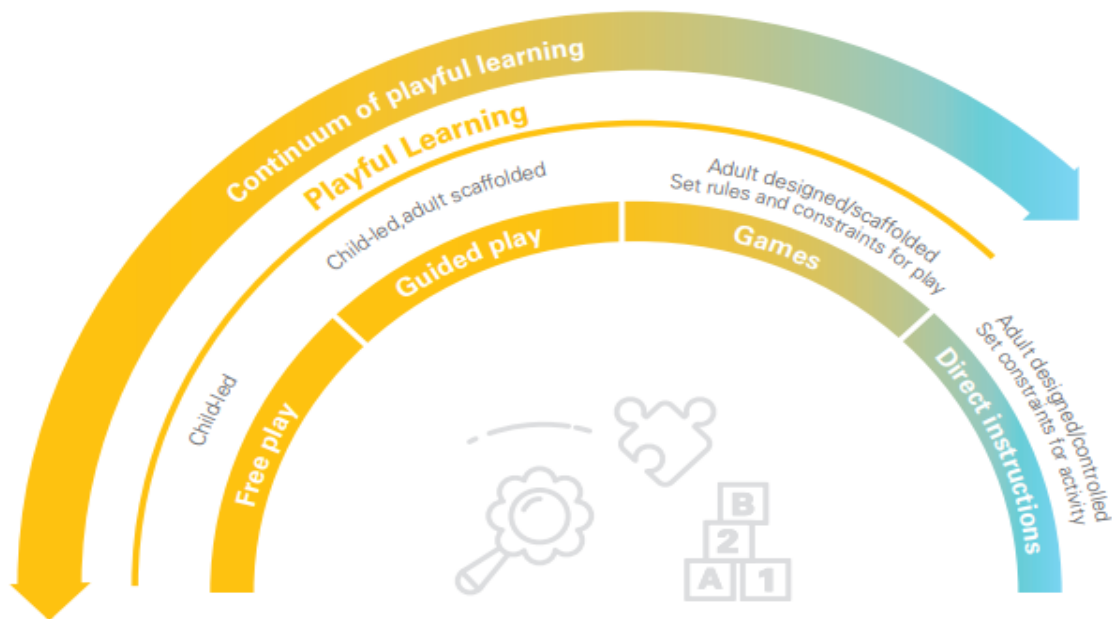
-Communicate with classmates and negotiate differences in points of view e.g. "I want to be the mother. Could you be the baby? Or maybe the grandmother?"

-Derive satisfaction from their own accomplishments e.g. "We did it together!"

-Develop creativity and explore aesthetics and artistry e.g. "I wonder what will happen if I mix these colours together?"

The stages of play

Figure 1. Continuum of Playful Learning



Source: Adapted from Zosh, Jennifer N., et al. Learning through play: a review of the evidence. LEGO Foundation, 2017.

Nurturing activities

- Face painting using feathers
- Hand massage
- Mirrors (to make eye contact) or looking at one another through glass
- Dark tent with sensory objects
- Blanket wrapping
- Special diary/scrapbook of fun things they've done together
- Making their own treasure box
- Badge making
- Bubbles, different scales
- Temporary tattoos and nail painting (with permission)
- Invisible string which will always link you together
- Making a transitional object
- Making jewellery
- Drawing around the child or around hands
- Peer massage on each other's back (children need to ask permission before they touch another)
- Memory boxes
- Looking after special objects such as a bear or a doll
- Worry dolls (Silly Billy by Anthony Browne) or worry bags (A Huge Bag of Worries by Virginia Ironside)
- Silhouettes of the children
- Feelings tree
- Make a happy face with things you can find in nature
- Create a piece of shared art on large paper
- Make your own dreamcatcher

Belonging/Relationship Building

- Sharing stories and walking through a story together
- Cooking, possibly with no recipe
- Gardening
- Construction such as Lego with no instructions.
- Taking things apart e.g. old electrical items
- Painting a picture together
- Messy play e.g. gloop, shaving foam, flour, glitter, spaghetti hoops, jelly, snow (cornflour and conditioner), moon sand, sand mousse (sand, water and bubble bath) mud pies, shredded paper
- Using puppets
- Sand trays
- Small world play side by side
- Feely bag, treasure chest.
- Building dens
- Dressing up box
- Make a quiz up about each other/yourself
- Play 'facial expression snap'
- Lay on your back and look at the clouds - what shapes/animals do the clouds look like?
- Make face masks to show different expressions/feelings

Problem solving/Thinking

- Using musical instruments to act out feelings
- Construction with a challenge in mind e.g. make something with four wheels or a tall tower
- Categorising and sorting e.g. find different things that are the same colour, different ways to put things into groups
- Treasure hunt/ scavenger hunt
- Sand tray - relating it to feelings
- Talking about characters from books and exploring their emotional landscape.
- Dancing/painting to different types of music
- Puppet scenarios to address issues
- Water play with problem solving e.g. how can I move the water/ fill the bucket?
- Board games or strategy games such as chess where the children have to think ahead.
- Computer games with decisions to make (Scratch) CBeebies games such as build your own park in Bob the Builder land, Simple City.
- Make a seed ball to encourage birds into the school grounds
- Develop a secret code to write messages to each other
- Make models with lollipop sticks
- Draw/photocopy a picture and cut it up to make a jigsaw
- Create a set of Top Trump cards for something you are interested in
- Turn a box into a dice to play games with

Teamwork

- Misfits (you draw the head, fold the paper, pass it on and the next person draws the next body part)
- Box game (joining dots, taking turns)
- Blanket games as a team
- Using blindfolds to get over different obstacles
- Sitting back to back and describe something for the other child to draw
- Simon Says
- Make a badge to show skills and strengths
- Mirroring/shadowing activities
- Tasting things with blindfolds on and discussing preferences
- Draw around a child and then stick post it notes when they achieve something
- Den building
- Cooking and creating menus for one another
- Drain pipe problem solving games
- DT projects as a team
- Roleplay, hot seating
- Junk modelling monsters - what qualities do they have?
- Post-it note game
- Love/hate games e.g. likes and dislikes collage
- Make a home-made marble run
- Make a mini-beast hotel
- Use Lego models/plastercine figures to make a stop motion film