

PLAY – The Serious Work of Childhood

Play is the work of childhood. It is the occupation of children, and for good reason! Through play, children learn to think about what they want to do, and how to get their bodies to cooperate. Play prepares the mind and the body for higher development and academic learning. Children cannot be ready to learn in school until they have had enough opportunities for play.

During play, young children learn to:

Sit up, stabilize trunk, neck, shoulder girdle

Use arms and hands for reach and grasp

Coordinate movements between the 2 sides of the body

Move in space and become familiar with over, under, on top of, inside of, through

Shift between different positions and hold one position for longer periods of time

Develop more precise and accurate ways of grasping and holding things

Imitate and copy movements and body positions as well as visual models

Develop muscles all over the body, including hands and mouth

Hold and use utensils, tools

Coordinate eye movements to hand activities

Find things quickly with eyes, track moving things smoothly with eyes

Discriminate differences between size, shape, weight, colour, and other qualities

Shift attention and interact with materials

Explore different ways of doing things and observe the results

Pay attention to things for longer and longer

Tolerate frustration when doing things that are challenging

Solve problems that arise

Understand cause and effect

Label all kinds of things in the environment with words and sentences

Ask for things, negotiate, protest, talk about what they see and do

Notice differences in quantity and amount

Work together and share

Ask for help as needed

PLAY is most meaningful and effective when it is FUN, but being fun does not mean it is NOT important.

After good food and good health, **PLAY** is the most important thing you can provide that will influence your child's **SUCCESS** in the future!! Play in the morning, play in the afternoon, play more quietly in the evening too!

RECIPES FOR FUN!

PLAY-DOUGH

Mix 3 cups water and food coloring in a bowl. In a separate bowl, mix 3 cups flour, 1.5 cups salt, and 2 tablespoons cream of tartar. To this mix, add 3-6 tablespoons of oil or crisco. Now mix the contents of the 2 bowls together. Cook over medium heat until mixture reaches the consistency of mashed potatoes. Let cool and knead with hands. Store in airtight bag or container. Will keep longer if refrigerated after use. (Some people use unsweetened Kool-Aid mix instead of food colouring.)

TEXTURED FINGERPAINTS

Add rice or sand to finger-paints or thick paint to provide extra texture and tactile input. Or mix 1 cup laundry starch, one cup cold water, and 3 cups of soap flakes.

BAKER'S CLAY

4 cups flour 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water 1 cup salt

Mix and knead ingredients. If it's too stiff, add more water. Shape into whatever you want. Bake in 300 degree oven 1 hour or until hard. When cold, paint and decorate. To preserve, spray with shellac. To keep unused dough moist, store in plastic bag or airtight container.

PAPIER MACHE

2 bowls, cloth, warm water, flour, old newspapers, mint oil

Papier mache pulp is easy to make and fun to use. First, tear up the newspaper into small pieces, about 1 inch. (You can tear the paper into strips and have the kid(s) tear it into 'confetti' bits.) Put all the paper bits in a large bowl and soak in warm water for at least an hour. Then, empty water and put paper in a cloth. Close the corners and squeeze out as much water as you can. Put the 'pulp' in the bowl. In the other bowl, add 2 large spoons of flour with enough water to make a paste (like slightly thin oatmeal). A few drops of oil helps to keep your work from cracking when dry. Mix the paste and the pulp together and you're ready to go. The pulp can be handled and molded like clay to make animals, buildings, trees, people, etc. You can use a form such as a balloon, bag, etc. to make larger items like masks or piñatas and other large projects. You can also use paper strips in the paste for larger shapes.

CRAZY GOOP

1 cup water, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cornstarch, food colouring (optional), zipper bags (optional)

Add cornstarch slowly to warm or hot water, stirring it in. You can add colour if desired. Kids love to play with this goop on a tray or bowl (outdoors is neater). You can place the goop in a zipper bag if the child is not ready to have his or her hands in the goop.