

WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT TO SUPPORT MY CHILD?

- Have some creative drawing materials available to your child, such as paper, pens, paint, pencils and crayons. This will help them be creative and imaginative.
- Give your child access to natural materials to play with such as sand, water, dry pasta, rice and wooden toys. This type of play helps develop your child's senses, sight, sound, smell, taste and touch which is very important for young children.
- Keep a selection of empty boxes and materials for your child to build, create and construct with.
- Have conversations with your child about things that make them wonder and feel curious, for example "I wonder how many stars are in the sky?" "How long do you think it would take to get to the moon?"
- Give your child opportunities to play outside and take notice of nature, for example a walk to the park or to the beach, maybe create a treasure hunt, or play eye spy.
- Join your child in playful activities, this will be fun for you both and will also give you an opportunity to see what they have learned, what they like to do, and how they see the world.
- Provide props for your child's play for example cups, plates, wooden spoons, pots and pans. There are times when real life items are much more beneficial to children than plastic toys and they are most likely easier to find around the house.
- Look at books together, sing songs and make up stories, this can be fun for your child, support your relationship and will also help your child develop the skills which will help them later on with reading and writing.

By supporting your child in this way and providing opportunities for play and learning in your everyday life you are supporting your child's long-term growth, development and wellbeing.



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Supporting Playful Learning at Home

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WHAT IS PLAY AND WHY IS PLAY SO VALUABLE FOR YOUR CHILD

Learning through play is one of the best ways for your child to learn, and play is something that comes naturally to most children. Through play children can experience and learn to understand many things including their feelings and emotions, which is very important for young children.

Play is often a large part of a child's everyday life, your child could be having a picnic with their dolls, pushing their trains around a train track or racing cars up and down the hallway. It's important to note that we will often watch our children going about their day, they might be sorting their toys, spending time at the sink washing their hands, or even singing or talking to themselves. Would it surprise you to know that it's likely that at these times your child is learning through play? Here are some points you might like to consider which will support your child to grow and learn through play.

Through play children learn about how relationships and friendships work and how to build friendships. For example, your child may enjoy playing families, "I'm the big sister and you are the little brother", during this type of play children will take on different roles and learn about different ways to communicate and express themselves. They may do this when playing alone, or with their friends or family.

Children will often use play to work out their thoughts and feelings about their life. For example, if your child is starting school, playing schools with them is a great way for them to show you how they think school will be, what the teacher will be like. If your child has experienced something new, for example a trip to the zoo or their first time on a train, you might notice them playing out this experience with their toys or with their friends and family.

Children often develop their own rules in their imaginary play from what they know about the world, or how they think things should be. However, they might not necessarily be how things are in real life and this is ok and a very natural part of play. By providing items for your child to play imaginatively you can support this learning. Having a dress up box can be fun and there is no need to go out and buy special dress up clothes. Often items such as hats, scarves, bags, sheets and oversized shirts provide many more opportunities for your child to play imaginatively. Today a sheet could become a sail for a pirate ship and tomorrow it could become a tent for a camping adventure!

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Play is fun but this doesn't necessarily mean that children will always be laughing. During play children will often concentrate for periods and be completely absorbed in what they are doing. Helping your child to develop their concentration in a fun way is something you can do by providing them with blocks, Lego and arts and crafts materials so that they can invent and create things from their imagination. Providing puzzles and board games is also a good idea and can provide an opportunity for you to play together.

Children can play alone, in small groups or in large groups, and even take pleasure watching other children play. Each type of play is important and will support your child's growth and development. To support your child with this you can bring your child out and about, for walks to the local park.

If your child is showing an interest in something such as dinosaurs, or farms or visiting a country or being a vet for example, see if you can find out more about these things together. You could go to the library or look up things on the internet. As well as supporting their play you are supporting their self-esteem and telling them that their interests are important to you.

Through play children learn to be curious, and take risks, for example building a tower and going higher and higher, or balancing on a climbing frame. You can help your child with this by encouraging them and helping as long as they need your help. They may need you to hold their hand the first few times on the climbing frame or your encouragement to try that tower again after it falls for the second time! Supporting your child to play in this way helps them learn to be resilient, that it's ok to make mistakes and try again and importantly that you will be there for them.