

The Value of Play

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Parents often hear of the importance of play in preschool. But playing with dolls and blocks seems to have little to do with the academic knowledge that children will need to succeed at school. So why is it so important?

Play is the foundation for all learning for young children. Play is how children begin to understand and process their world.

Children's play unlocks their creativity and imagination, and develops reading, thinking, and problem solving skills as well as further develops motor skills. It provides the base foundation for learning.



Why is play so important and what do preschoolers learn when they play?

Language and Vocabulary

When playing with other children or adults, vocabulary and language skills are developed. Your child will listen and learn the language they hear without even realizing. Children will learn to use language to communicate meaning as well as picking up new words and hearing the grammatical structure.

- *Vehicles and Animals.* Playing with cars, trucks and trains as well as animals provides for many new vocabulary words as children learn the names of each, what they do, what they eat or where you can find them. Additionally, children and adults can create all kinds of scenarios that the vehicles or animals might find themselves in, providing for further language and vocabulary development.
- *The Home Corner and Dolls.* Playing in the home corner or with dolls allows your child to reenact what happens in their everyday life, using the words and phrases they hears.

Talking, singing, rhyming, and word play help them to master the rules and sounds of language while they have fun.

Social and Emotional Skills

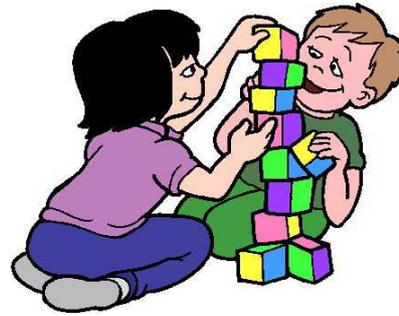
Play develops imagination and creativity and gives children practice in social skills such as waiting, negotiating, taking turns, cooperation, compromise, sharing and expressing emotions. As children learn about themselves and the world, they acquire self-confidence, self-reliance and self-expression.



Cognitive Development

Through play children learn about concepts, how to group and classify objects, how to make sense of things and events, and how to solve problems.

Play often involves trial and error, and problem-solving tasks. Play requires a child to make choices, direct activities, and make plans to reach a goal.



Blocks and puzzles are excellent “basics” to provide your child with many opportunities to learn these important skills.

Gross and Fine Motor Skills

Gross motor skills involve the large muscles of the legs and arms while fine motor development is building the muscles of the hands that will be used for writing. Play can provide many opportunities to work on strengthening these muscles without your child even being aware of it!

- *Balls and Balance Beams.* Kicking balls and walking on balance beams can help your child become more coordinated.
- *Stringing Beads and Lacing.* Giving children beads and plastic tipped laces provide a fun way to work on fine muscle control.

Learning through Play

Children play because it is fun. Play takes many forms, but the heart of play is pleasure. And with pleasure comes a powerful drive to repeat such activities. With repetition comes mastery. And mastery brings a sense of accomplishment and confidence.



Sharkeyhill Community Preschool

Sharkeyhill Preschool uses the Highscope curriculum which is play based. Highscope is a quality approach to early childhood care and education which is based on over 40 years of research and practice. It identifies and builds on each child's individual strengths, interests and abilities. It recognises children as 'active learners' and promotes independence, curiosity, decision-making, co-operation, persistence, creativity and problem-solving.



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