

Why is important to play with your children

Rolling on the floor with your baby or getting down on your knees to play with a young child is vitally important—both to your child’s development and to your own health.

Play is essential for developing social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills in children.

In fact, far from being a waste of time or just a fun distraction, **play is a time when your child is often learning the most.** Whether it’s an infant playing “peek-a-boo,” a toddler playing make-believe, or an older child playing a board game, play develops social skills, stimulates a child’s imagination and makes kids better adjusted, smarter, and less stressed.

As well as aiding your child’s development, **play can also bring you closer together and strengthen the parent-child bond that will last a lifetime.**

How to play with your child

Children need time to play alone, with other children. But playing with their parents is also important. Here are some helpful tips to encourage play:

- **Establish regular play times.** It may be for twenty minutes before dinner every night or every Saturday morning, for example. Remember, this time spent playing together is benefiting both of you.
- **Give your child your undivided attention.** Turn off the TV and your cell phone and make the time to play with your child without distraction. Having your undivided attention makes your child feel special.
- **Get down to your child’s level.** That may mean getting down on your knees or sitting on the floor. Match your child’s intensity during play—if your child is loud and energetic, be loud and energetic, too.
- **Embrace repetition.** It may be boring to you, but it’s not to your child. Children learn through repetition. Let your child play the same game over and over. Your child will move on when he or she is ready.
- **Let your children take the lead.** Become part of their game rather than trying to dictate the play. In pretend play, let your child call the shots, make the rules, and determine the pace of play. Ask questions and follow along—you’ll likely get drawn into imaginative new worlds that are fun for you, too.
- **Don’t force play or try to prolong a game.** The best way to teach a new skill is to show children how something works, then step back and give them a chance to try. When your child is tired of an activity, it’s time to move on to something new.
- **Make play age-appropriate and consider safety.** If a game is too hard or too easy, it loses its sense of pleasure and fun. Help your child find age-appropriate activities and understand any safety rules for play. Nothing ruins a fun game faster than a child getting hurt.

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