



Peter's Patch  
Forest School - Day Care - After School Club

## Play

### What do we mean by Play?

Play is one of those terms which mean many things to different people; therefore, it is important that there is a common understanding of play.

"Play stands at the centre of human development, especially in the formative years, but its importance has to be defended by each generation anew, often on different grounds"

Sturrock, Else and Russell (2004)

- Play is something we all do, or have done. Most adults will recall the significant positive elements of their childhood in the context of play – in favourite places, alone or with friends, following their own instincts, ideas and interests.
- Play is universal; it is common to children of all countries and cultures.
- Play, although difficult to define, is one of the essential components in a child's life and is an intrinsic part of their learning, growth, well-being and development.



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- Play is essential for the enhancement of family and community life. Strong vibrant communities that are confident about their future have, at their heart, a clear and visible commitment to children and to play as the fundamental expression of childhood.
- Perhaps the best description of play is in the words of children - 'Play makes me happy; play is my best thing; play is having fun; play makes you strong.'

### What are the benefits of play?

For children and young people play is first and foremost about fun, relaxation and friendship. However, evidence shows that giving them access to a variety of play spaces and opportunities also helps ensure their health, growth and development.

To a child, play is their culture. Play stimulates children's learning imagination, helps develop social skills, allows them to experiment and discover things about themselves, their relationships, and their environment. It tests and stretches their boundaries, promotes their self confidence and self esteem and often promotes vigorous physical and mental exercise.



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Play is a process directed by children and as such, not driven by outcomes. However we know there will be tangible outcomes for individuals and society when children's play needs are met.

It is through play that children communicate, describe their reality and experience and voice their feelings; it is through play that children can contribute to the richness of society's cultural life. One of the objectives of a Shared Future is the "development of a shared community where people wish to learn, live, work and play together".

- Creative play is about drawing, painting, playing music, cooking, or making something (anything!). It doesn't matter what your child makes, or whether there's a perfect result. Through creative play, your child expresses his- or herself, learns about process, discovers cause and effect and gains pride in their achievements.
- Imaginative play starts in your child's head. It can be role-playing, creating a new game, giving toys a voice, inventing adventures or playing a word game. Through imaginative play your child begins to understand the world, investigates fact and fiction, and develops positive relationships with themselves and other people.



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- Active play is how your child moves in the world. It is running, jumping, catching and dancing - all of which build strength and boost coordination. Active play is also a great way to learn about teamwork, release tension and feel truly free.

Play is a serious business, as far as children are concerned. Play makes an immense contribution to your child's development in lots of important ways.

As a child plays, they learn all about themselves and what they can do. Play helps them make friends, enjoy company and discover the world around them. Your child has fun while playing and at the same time is exercising, discovering and developing both emotionally and physically. That's what makes play so wonderful!

### Improving Confidence through Play

Play boosts your child's self-confidence in many ways:

- Exploration. By learning through discovery, your child develops belief in their skills and abilities.



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- **Movement.** As soon as your child can move, they want to play. The "I got there by myself" expression shows your child's growing confidence. Playing is also a fantastic form of exercise and as the facts show us, children need regular exercise.
- **Imagination.** Children use their imagination in pretend-play. This is a new and exciting experience for children, and they love it.
- **Creativity.** Every child can be creative in play. Your child will be delighted when you smile at their drawings and paintings.
- **Socialising.** Playing with friends is a great way for your child to learn important social skills like sharing and taking turns.
- **Problem-solving.** Your child's confidence is boosted by solving a puzzle - they would rather do it without too much help.
- **Language.** Playing with others builds up your child's vocabulary, speech and communication skills.



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### Top Tips to Boost Your Child's Confidence through Play

- Give lots of praise when your child plays well.
- Use age-appropriate toys that challenge your child's understanding.
- Gently encourage your child to play with puzzle toys.
- Aim for your child to increase learning in small stages.
- Let your child choose what toys to play with, most of the time.
- Prove that you are interested by watching your child at play.
- Be sympathetic when your child becomes frustrated in play.
- Avoid comparing the way your child plays with the way another child plays.
- Brag to your friends and relatives about your child's play achievements in front of them.
- Give your child a cuddle sometimes during play.

Updated: November 2024