



Play Is How Children Learn

Why is play important?

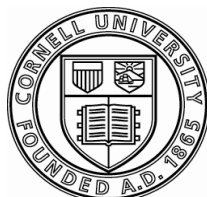
- Many of the skills children need to be ready for school can be learned through play.
- There are four main areas of child development: social-emotional, intellectual (thinking), language, and physical development.
- When children play, they are learning and building skills in all of the main areas of development.
- Parents talking and playing with their children can benefit them even more.

Play helps build social skills as children:

- Learn to think about how others are feeling
- Take turns and share
- Make and follow rules
- Work through conflict
- Become leaders
- Have fun
- Use their imaginations
- Deal with stress
- Work as a group member

Play helps build thinking skills as children:

- Practice concepts and skills like colors and shapes
- Learn new ideas and skills from adults and other children
- Solve problems
- Experiment with different objects
- Plan what they will do next
- Learn the difference between what is real and what is make believe
- Take risks



Play helps build language and literacy skills as children:

- Speak and listen
- Have conversations
- Practice new words
- Use describing words to talk about their play
- Re-tell stories

Play helps build physical development skills as children:

- Practice using the large muscles in their legs and arms
- Practice using the small muscles in their hands
- Run, jump, hop and do other activities that help them develop coordination

Play activities to do with young children:

There are many fun learning activities you can do with simple items you have at home.

- Pretend play—use items from around your house to play school, restaurant, store, or post office
- Dress-up—give your children old clothes or uniforms to play dress up
- Puzzles—make your own puzzles by cutting apart cereal boxes
- Play dough—make your own with 1 cup flour, 1/2 cup salt, 1/2 cup water and food coloring
- Simple games—play “Simon Says” or “I Spy”

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