



## Play Time!

Play is fun, but it's also important. Play is a young child's way of learning and making sense of new experiences. When children feel competent in their play, their self-confidence grows. Children who feel confident will be more likely to try new things, work with others, and take on challenging tasks.

- Support your child's learning through play by following his lead, encouraging his curiosity, and respecting his interests.
- Set reasonable limits and provide safe places for your child to play and explore. Your child's idea of play may include unsafe choices like jumping on the stairs, so you need to determine what is safe play for your child.
- Find safe places for your child to walk, run, climb, and dig to help him build strength and balance. Visit new places to play and explore together, such as an indoor gym, a playground, a park, a pond, or a beach where your child can move about freely.
- Play and exploration go hand in hand. Stomping through mud puddles, squeezing play dough, and kicking balls are all play to your child. They are also opportunities for exploration and learning about the world and how it works.
- Give your child uninterrupted time to play, explore, ask questions, and find answers on her own. Your child may move from one play activity to another to try a variety of things, or she may repeat the same activity over and over again to figure out how something works.
- Prepare in advance for messy play activities. Children can't play comfortably when they are worried about getting dirty. Be prepared for mud, paint, and water explorations with extra towels and provide your child with play clothes that can get dirty.
- Put out household objects and recycled materials such as boxes, tubes, and egg cartons along with tape and markers. Have your child make his own playthings.
- Play outdoor games with rules such as soccer, basketball, and red light/green light. These games help your child learn to take turns, listen to directions, and cooperate with others.
- Play traditional board games and games with dice together. These games will help your child learn how to take turns, follow directions, and become a graceful winner or loser.
- Play guessing games and help your child notice and describe things around him. As you go for a walk or ride on the bus describe one thing you see and have your child guess the object. Then switch roles—it's his turn to describe an object.
- Allow your child to make up her own games and rules. It makes every game a new adventure and prompts your child to consider fairness.