

The Power of Play

Play is social and fun

Our children play for the sake of playing — because they enjoy it. They are not consciously trying to improve their motor skills, practise new sounds, or make connections with others — yet these are important benefits that happen through play. When our children are having a good time playing with us, they learn in a natural way.

Play encourages taking turns

If our children are going to learn to communicate, they must get involved in two-way interactions. Taking turns with actions or words is the essential element of shared play and of conversation. “I take a turn; then you take a turn”, and so on!

Play is easy to respond to, even without words

One of the benefits of play is that children will respond to it, even if they have a limited ability or desire to talk. The active side of play — like falling down in “Ring around the Rosie”, or clapping in “If You’re Happy and You Know It”— gives children who have trouble talking a chance to take part. In addition, play helps children connect physical actions with the words that describe those actions — the best way to reinforce understanding and learning.

Play involves repetition

It’s possible to repeat words and actions more often in a play activity than it is during our daily activities. We can’t pour David’s milk ten times at breakfast, but we can spend hours pouring water in the bathtub, having a pretend tea party, or singing “This is the way we pour our milk.”

Play integrates many of the senses

Our children are more likely to learn and remember what we’re talking about when they see, hear, feel, smell and taste it. If they hear the word “apple” — and see it, feel its roundness, smell it and taste it — they are more likely to understand “apple” and be able to use the word later. Learning is strengthened when several senses send the same message to the brain.

Play is one of the best ways for our children to learn how to communicate and to get along with others.