

Meaningful Play Tips

What exactly is play? Play is taking part in an activity that has no purpose and is done recreationally. Some of our greatest memories from childhood are when we played. Although it doesn't seem like it, play is very important in a child's brain development.

During this time that our children are home, they are spending lots of time playing. We might wonder what our children are getting out of their play time and how we can enhance it. Below are some helpful things to remember about play.

- 1. Children learn through play.** Playing boosts children's cognitive, social, and physical skills. It helps children learn vocabulary, math, social skills, critical thinking, problem-solving, and other skills they will need in school and in life.
- 2. Play can be simple.** It can be as simple as rolling in the grass, throwing and catching a ball, skipping, building with blocks, and dressing up in different clothes.
- 3. Make time for your child to play every day.** It is important for children to play in a variety of ways, every day.
- 4. Allow your child to make his own decisions about play.** Give your child plenty of free play time to choose what to play and how to play. Free play promotes creativity, reasoning skills, and independence.
- 5. Play should be fun.** Enjoy playing with your child and making memories that you will both treasure.

Creating Play Centers at Home

Many pre-k children are missing their classroom environments. You can re-create some of the class environment at home and give your child the structure she might be missing. To create the centers, put the materials in a box, basket, drawer or a shelf. The items can be used throughout the day and you can allow your child to make choices and lead her own play activities.

Literacy Center

- books
- magazines
- paper
- envelopes
- glue
- common words written on 3x5 cards
- crayons
- pens
- pencils
- scissors
- tape

Science Center

- leaves
- rocks
- sticks
- plastic animals
- net or strainer
- magnifying glass

Art Center

- paper
- crayons
- markers
- pencils
- paint
- brushes
- scissors
- glue
- glitter
- stickers
- coloring books

Sensory Center

- play dough
- cotton balls
- feathers
- rice or sand
- foam ball
- string or pipe cleaners

Art Projects at Home

Are you still working from home but feel like you would like to do more art projects with your child? Trying to multitask can be challenging. Below are some simple tips to make art projects fun for your child but easy for you.



- 1. Don't worry about prep time.** Fun and easy projects can be done with items from around the house like toilet paper rolls, cotton balls, crayons and markers.
- 2. Find a time that works.** When you're prepping dinner or getting ready for the next day may be good times for your child to work on a project. Be present and multitask if you can, but remember that it's OK for your child to work on the project on his own.
- 3. Find a designated space for art.** A table in the kitchen, yard, or basement, a desk, counter top, or floor space may be good places for your child to work on projects. Try different spaces to see which works best for you and your child.
- 4. Let your child take the lead.** Follow your child's lead and support her ideas by asking questions and encouraging her to experiment and test her ideas.
- 5. Praise your child.** Observe and talk with your child about how he is doing and recognize or reward him when he does a good job.

Helpful Websites

Playing at Home

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/five-essentials-meaningful-play>

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-things-every-parent-play>

<https://www.pentagonplay.co.uk/news-and-info/why-free-play-is-crucial-for-early-years-children>

Learning Center at Home

<http://playwithpurposefl.com/blog/2017/4/16/learning-centers-at-home>

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/10-prop-box-ideas-mini-learning-centers-home>

Art Projects at Home

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/meaningful-art-projects-parents-can-fit-busy-day>

<https://www.highlights.com/parents/crafts/31-kids-crafts>

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/kids-activities-and-printables/activities-for-kids/arts-and-craft-ideas/10-clever-craft-projects-to-try-your-kids-summer.html>