

FEBRUARY 2022

TIMELY TOPICS

JORDAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



PLAY TO LEARN

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

- Play to Learn
- Stages of Play
- Troubleshooting Play Time
- In Case You Missed It

PARENT CLASSES:

No Classes in February.

Next Classes will be on March 30, 2022.

Information will be in March's Newsletter.

We begin playing with our kids in the first months of life. We hold up stuffed animals, show them rattles, give them soft toys to hold and chew, and play peek-a-boo and tickle games. We start this all before they are rolling over, sitting on their own, or walking.

From the time our babies are born to the time they start kindergarten, so many important skills are learned through play.

Our kids learn about the world around them. They figure out what they like and what they don't like. Kids learn how to interact with their family members and include others in their play. They learn problem solving skills and how to be flexible in their play and thinking. Play also provides a lot of opportunities for our kids to learn how to communicate about what they want and what they see. It teaches them how to keep themselves occupied without needing us all of the time. It builds up their confidence.

We know the importance of play, but it can be confusing to know how to teach your child to play on their own or which toys and activities to use. This month we'll cover the different stages of play and activities that kids typically enjoy in each stage. We'll also discuss some common issues that occur during play and how to navigate through those.

6 Stages of Play

The type of play our kids will engage in changes as they grow. Most play stages are based on what kids do at a particular age. However, keep in mind the stage that best fits your child right now. Kids with developmental delays may also be delayed with their play. Knowing which stage your child is in can help you know which toys and activities may work best for them now and what to expect next.

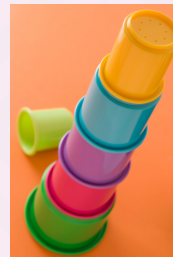
Unoccupied Play

- Babies or small kids play by touching, moving, and putting toys in their mouth. Play isn't organized yet. They are exploring what's around them and starting to figure out how things work.
- Types of toys: balls, stuffed and soft toys, rattles, board books, cups, play gyms, activity tables



Solitary Play

- During solitary play, kids will play with simple toys by themselves. They continue to explore a variety of toys and start learning problem solving and cause and effect.
- Pop up toys, ring stackers, musical toys, stacking cups, balls



Onlooker Play

- Kids will watch each other and be aware that other kids are around, but won't necessarily play with other kids or near them yet.
- Board books, puzzles, cars, cause and effect toys, stackers, pop up toys



**Note on safety: Check all toys for small pieces and sharp edges. Get rid of broken toys or pieces. Supervise your child while they play to ensure safety.*

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Parallel Play

- Kids are playing side by side and with the same toys, but are not yet playing together. This is what we see most of in toddler classes and even into preschool.
- Cars, trains, sensory tables, simple art activities, barns and castles



Associative Play

- This type of play usually begins in the preschool years. Kids are wanting to play with each other, not just toys. There might not be a lot of interaction yet, but it's coming.
- Playground equipment, dress up, play houses



Cooperative Play

- During cooperative play, kids are playing games together. There are roles and rules with this type of play. Kids are interacting with each other and using materials around them for their play. This happens during late preschool - kindergarten.
- Playing school, doctor, grocery store, house, etc.



Troubleshooting Play

Play time is a great opportunity for kids to learn a lot of skills! However, it can also be difficult for many kids. Here are some things to keep in mind to help you improve your child's play time.

My Child Won't Play Alone

- It's common for some kids to not want to play by themselves, but we do want to teach them how to keep themselves occupied with a toy or activity for a few minutes.
- Teach this skill by choosing a toy or activity that your child really enjoys right now but can do without your help. Play with them for a few minutes until your child is settled. Then stay near them but don't be as attentive (pretend to read a magazine, send a quick text, drink your water, etc). Shift your attention away from them for 15-30 seconds then start playing with them again.
- Once your child tolerates these smaller breaks from your attention, make them longer or leave the room for a brief moment. Come back and play with them again -- give them some attention. Then try another short break. Continue this until your child can play for several minutes on their own.
- If you're cooking or getting yourself ready and can't keep leaving the room, set them up near you so you can still talk to them and give attention.

My Child Only Plays Alone

- If your child only wants to play alone, we need to figure out a way to become involved in their play. We want them to learn to tolerate us playing near them and with the same toys to actually playing with us.
- Start by just being near your child. Play with a toy quietly. Hand them the next piece of their puzzle. Talk about what they are doing. Avoid questions and directing the play.
- Also try incorporating activities they need you for -- pushing in the swing, blowing bubbles, etc. This is a great way to include yourself in their activities.

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Troubleshooting Play

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My Child Wanders / Dumps Out Toys / Carries Toys Instead of Playing

- These behaviors are common when kids don't know what to do with the toys.
- Make sure the toys are appropriate for their stage of play. If there are a lot of pieces or are too difficult, kids tend to do what they can with the toys (throw down the stairs, dump out, kick, carry the toys).
- Show your child what to do with the toy. Model how to put the money in the piggy bank or the pieces in the puzzle. Show them how to make a block tower.
- Limit how many toys and pieces are out. Only have 5 cars out instead of 20. Bring out a few blocks and put the rest in another bag. Have 2-3 books out instead of a whole bookcase filled.

I'm super busy and not sure how to incorporate play time into our schedule.

- Between work, kids, other obligations, our lives get busy quick! Finding extra time to sit down and play with your child can be difficult.
- If you can, schedule the time into your day. If you know you have some time between morning snack and lunch, make that your time for play.
- If you work outside of the home, is there a time on the weekend? How can you use other kids or adults in the home to help with play?
- Attach play time to a routine you're already doing -- bath time, outside time, etc.

My kid won't share.

- Most kids do not learn how to share until around 4 years old. Your child might share a little before this or after. But just know that if you have a toddler or two year old, even a preschooler.....they shouldn't know how to share yet and we should expect them to!
- Instead, have multiple cars, buses, puzzles, etc.
- If a toy is particularly problematic right now, put it away for a while.
- Focus on turn taking with an adult first -- I roll the ball to you, you roll it back or I put in a puzzle piece, then it's your turn.
- Teach waiting -- I pick you up baby and give the baby a hug. Then I pick you up and give you a hug.

In Case You Missed It

Due to a lot of our families being sick and going back to distance learning, last month's classes were pre-recorded and posted online so families could watch at their convenience.

Below are the class titles and links to the videos:

Talking to Your Family About Your Child's Special Needs

- <https://vimeo.com/667366363>

Teaching Safety Skills

- <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/667426625>