

WINTER 2024

TIMELY TOPICS

JORDAN CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



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PARENT CLASSES:

Available on YouTube:

- Using Play to Increase Interactions and Communication
- Solutions to Challenges During Play
- See back page for QR codes and links to videos

LEARN TO PLAY AND PLAY TO LEARN

We have been told for years that play is very important for young children and is a powerful way to develop other skills.

Whether you have a baby, toddler, two-year old, or a preschooler, play teaches young children about the world around them and their impact on that world. They learn that pushing certain buttons will cause lights and music to happen. They figure out how to stack blocks just right to create a tall tower. They pretend their dinosaur is destroying that same tower. They want to “make dinner” by mixing lots of ingredients in their pots and pans. They also learn how to include others in their play through words and other forms of communication. Balance and coordination improve as well as they play and explore in their home, daycare, school, and playground.

The importance of play is a huge topic! We will cover some basics about different types of play and when they develop as well as some activities that you can do with your child. You'll learn how to set up your home for play. We'll also cover some challenges that occur during play and how to address those.

Because play is such a huge topic, it's impossible to cover everything! Be sure to follow up with your child's early intervention provider or preschool teacher if you need more specific recommendations for your child.



6 Stages of Play



Play starts during the first year of life and continues throughout childhood. Below you'll find a brief description of the six stages of play. There are general age ranges of when these begin, but this can vary depending on developmental delays and other factors.

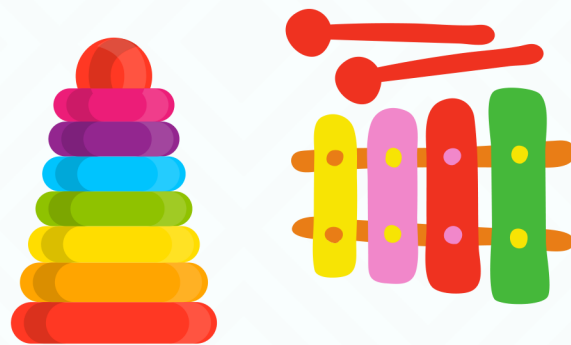
Unoccupied Play

- 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 at the same activity. 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.



Playing at Home

Kids love to play, right? And they love to play with adults and kids, right? Many kids do, but play time can be difficult for some families. Maybe we aren't sure how to play with our kids. Maybe our child prefers to play alone or doesn't seem interested in toys yet. Maybe we bought every toy and activity imaginable, but all that happens is everything gets dumped out and thrown down the stairs.

If play time is challenging, check out these suggestions to help your child interact with you and stay engaged with their toys.



Set Aside 15-20 Minutes a Day to Play

- Our lives are busy! Choosing a set time of day when you are able to play with your child will make it easier to stick with.
- Break the 15-20 minutes into smaller chunks of time if that's easier with your schedule.
- One parent/caregiver can play in the morning and another parent/caregiver can set aside time later in the day.



Choose Your Spot to Play

- If it's difficult to keep your child's attention or if they have a hard time staying with you, pick a spot to play.
- Create some boundaries so your child learns where they need to be. This could be a room, a rug, blanket, pop up tent, etc.
- Your play spot can be wherever you'd like! Bedroom, bathtub, big blanket or towel, high chair, child size table, etc.



Decrease Distractions

- Little kids can be easily distracted! Do your best to limit the biggest distractions (screens, extra toys, siblings, pets, etc).
- You want to be the most exciting thing in the room! Bring what you need (toys, bubbles, blanket, etc) and try to clear out whatever else you can.



Choose and Rotate Toys/Activities

- Pick 3-5 toys for your play time. Stick with those toys for 2-4 weeks and then rotate them for new ones.
- Choose toys that are interesting to your child, but avoid toys that limit interactions (electronics, other battery operated toys)
- Choose toys/activities based on your child's current skills. If your child isn't play with toys much yet, try motor games (jumping, swinging) or bubbles, music, chase, 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.



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 child 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.





Parent Classes are now on YouTube!

ANNOUNCEMENT!

You can find the monthly classes on YouTube and watch them when it's convenient for you. You can also find previously recorded topics.

Scan the QR code or paste the link into your browser:

[Using Play to Increase Interactions and Communication](#)



[Solutions to Challenges During Play](#)



Questions? Email me at lisa.cvetnich@jordandistrict.org