

FREE FUN FOR EVERYONE!!

Play is fun and free!

Your child is an expert at playing! Not only does it make them happy but your child is learning every day from playing and watching you.

- Play stimulates your child's brain development.
- Play helps your child learn about their world.
- Play fuels your child's curiosity, encourages and builds their imaginations through "make-believe" and creative activities and helps them make friends and understand both their own feelings and the feelings of others.
- Play is the purpose of childhood.

When you play with your child:

- B**e happy and involved.
- E**xercise your mind and try to think like them.
- F**ollow their rules.
- U**nderstand your child might need some solitary play.
- N**urture their interests.



Play Idea #1

Color of the Day

Need: You and your child

How to:

- At beginning of day pick your "Color of the Day."
- As you're driving in the car, shopping at the grocery store, or waiting at the doctor's office, help your toddler point to all the things she sees that match the color you've chosen.

Play Idea #2

"I Spy ___"

Need: You, and your child

How To:

While driving, cooking, walking and going through your day, take turns with child to say "I spy something red" or "I spy something round" and let your child guess what it is by looking around. Also send your child on a hunt to look around and tell you how many round things or yellow things they can find.

Play Idea #3

Pretend Time

Need: You, child, and imagination

How to:

- Give your child a series of instructions such as "Let's pretend you are a rabbit. Can you hop like a rabbit?" or "Let's pretend you are an elephant. Can you walk about like a big, heavy elephant?"
- Try other animals, or scenarios like pretend we are at restaurant or a flower growing or ask them what they want to pretend to be.

Play Idea #4

Paper Bag Blocks

Need: Paper grocery bags, newspapers, and tape

How to:

- Lay a paper bag flat on a floor or table.
- Fold the top over halfway and make a crease.
- Scrunch up newspaper one sheet at a time and fill the bag to the fold line.
- Fold the top over and tape the bag closed. If you like, paint or decorate the blocks before using.
- Build with blocks, make a tunnel, or carry around.

Play Idea #5

Sheet Day

Need: Bed sheets

How to:

Since you're stripping the beds anyway, give your child the sheets from all the beds you're changing. He/she can use them to create houses, tents, forts, or anything else they can dream up. You can also use a sheet as a parachute outside or inside. You can run under it, sit on it, and include many children.

Play Idea #6

Storyteller

Need: You, child, paper, and some objects around the house

How to:

Let your child tell you a story about all the "stuff" she got from around the house. You can write the story for her on paper and let her draw pictures. Your child will love that she wrote a book and you can read together over and over.

Play Idea #7

Tickle Talk

Need: Baby and you

How To:

Ask your baby. "Where's your tummy?" Then touch and tickle her tummy and say "There's your tummy!" And for a few times do it for different parts of the body. Your baby will learn new words from you repeating them.

Play Idea #8

Rhyme Time

Need: You and child

How To:

Rhyme throughout the day. Make activities into songs and rhyme what you are doing. Also make sounds and noises with your body to make a band. (Sam put on your shoe, it is blue and John can go outside with you.)

Play Idea #9

Show Time

Need: Child, paper towel rolls, pots and pans, empty containers, Cheerios

How To:

- Let your child make a band with pots, pans, and paper towels rolls for singing. They can use paper plates as cymbals. You can rhyme, dance, let them make up their own songs. You can turn on the radio and let them be part of the song they hear.
- Fill empty water bottles with Cheerios, popcorn kernels, rice, and let the child shake them around.

Play Idea #10

Act and Play

Need: You, your child and a story

How to:

Act out a scene in a book with your child, or let your child tell you a story and then act it out together. Use different voices for characters, make noises for animals and you can even make costumes. You can write down a new story and let your child draw pictures to create a book.

Play Idea #11

Bowling at Home

Need: Empty water bottles or soda bottles.

How To:

Let your child set up empty water bottles or soda bottles like bowling pins. Use a ball to roll and knock them over. You can also use rolled up socks or rolled up newspaper to make a ball.

Play Idea #12

Babble Play

Need: Baby and you

How To:

Talk to your baby as you do things all day. Repeat the noise they make to you. Or say, "where is your blankie?" "Here is your blankie!" Make daily tasks into conversations. Give them time to babble back. You can make it a sing song response, use your high voice, dance with the objects. Your baby will learn about language from you using it all the time.

Like these ideas? Visit www.earlyyearsinst.org for more amazing ways to play!

Play Idea #13

Puppet Play

Need: Socks, paper bags, fingers

How To:

- Sing songs using your fingers, like “this little spider” “five little ducks” and others.
- Tell stories with puppets.

Play Idea #14

Apple Treats

Need: Apple, knife, sugar, cinnamon, Ziploc bag

How to:

- Peel an apple and cut it into small pieces for your toddler OR cut it into larger slices and have your older toddler use a plastic knife to cut it into smaller pieces.
- Let your toddler add 1-2 tablespoons of sugar and about 1/2 teaspoon of cinnamon into a Ziploc bag.
- Add a few apple pieces, seal the bag, and shake to coat the apples.
- Remove the coated apples from the bag and eat.

Play Idea #15

Helloooo.....Baby!

Need: Large pieces of furniture to hide behind

How to:

- Like peek a boo, but you hide behind a piece of furniture.
- Call your baby by name, grabbing their attention before you pop out.
- Play this game by calling from a nearby room.
- Play this game using a large bath towel to cover your head.
- Peek out from the side of your baby’s bed after nap time.

Play Idea #16

Climbing Time

Need: Couch cushions or large pillows

How to:

- Make a big, soft pile of couch cushions or large pillows on the floor. Your toddler will have fun climbing and rolling around on them.
- For older toddlers, stack the cushions up like stairs against the couch and let him practice climbing up and down.

Play Idea #17

Water-Play in Kitchen or Outside

Need: Large and small plastic bowls, large plastic cooking spoon, and water

How to:

- Let your child pour water back and forth with spoon, in bowls and cup.
- Add ice cubes to make it more challenging.
- Float a few grapes in the water for spooning and eating.

Play Idea #18

Veggie Fun

Need: Frozen mixed vegetables, plastic bowls and containers.

How to:

- Give your teething toddlers frozen mixed vegetables straight from the freezer.
- Most kids like them better uncooked, and they can be a quick fix for those fussy times.
- Let them play with them with plastic containers and sort.