

Caregiver Training

Play: The Building Blocks of Development and Connection

Participant Material

Alberta Children and Family Services
2025



Alberta

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Play for Infants and Babies

Types of Play	What is Being Developed
Lap games – e.g., peekaboo, trotting and pat-a-cake.	Attachment and emotional bonding, language skills, social skills, motor development, self-regulation.
Hiding games – e.g., cover toys with a cloth, hide the infant or yourself, hide toy or toys under boxes or other toys.	Memory and attention, problem-solving, cause and effect, motor skills, social connection, emotional regulation.
Copying games – e.g., waving, blow kisses, clap and cheers, build a tower.	Imitation, social-emotional skills, motor skills, language skills, identity, connection, joint attention.
Finger play and songs – e.g., <i>eensy Weensy Spider, Where is Thumbkin?</i>	Language skills, fine motor skills, memory, listening, attention, emotional expression, social skills, body awareness and coordination.
Active experiences – e.g., dance with baby in your arms, pick berries with baby in a carrier, walk or run with baby in a stroller, be active with other members of the family, provide daily “tummy time” (where babies are awake and monitored by an adult), make music with rattles/drums/pots, share cultural teachings.	Muscle strength, motor skills, sensory skills, language skills, cultural identity and belonging, emotional bonding, social development, creativity, self-expression.



Play for Toddlers

Types of Play	What is Being Developed
Active games – e.g., rolling, throwing or kicking a ball, walking or running up and down a slope, follow the leader, chase and freeze, movement and finger play.	Physical skills, focus, attention, coordination, flexible thinking (e.g., the ability to try different ways of doing things if a first try fails), resilience.
Conversations and storytelling – e.g., simply watch and narrate their play, asking questions about what they're doing, telling stories about shared events, talking about feelings.	Language skills, working memory, language to describe feelings, emotional self-control.
Matching and sorting games – e.g., sort toys, clothes, objects, simple puzzles.	Understanding of rules for organizing (e.g., sort by shape, color, size), ability to hold the rule in mind and follow it, attention, language to describe similarities and differences.
Imaginary play – e.g., provide ordinary household objects, toys, clothing, ask questions about what they are doing when they play with these objects. Describe what you see happening, play along, and let child direct the play. Let child tell you what role to play and how to play it.	Problem solving, self-regulation, social, physical and life-skills (e.g., copy you sweeping the floor and emptying dirt in garbage).
Active experiences – e.g., play outdoors, in the snow, sand or water. Pretend to be different animals, string large beads on a shoelace, draw with a large crayon.	Muscle strength, motor skills, sensory skills, language skills, cultural identity and belonging, emotional bonding, social development, creativity, self-expression.



Play for Pre-School

Types of Play	What is Being Developed
<p>Imaginary play – e.g., role playing (e.g., pretend to go to the doctor), provide materials to build things they can pretend to use (e.g. blanket forts), read books about varied life experiences and connect with role playing.</p>	<p>Follow unstated rules in playing roles, hold complex ideas in mind, shape actions to follow rules, control impulses for actions that don't fit the role.</p>
<p>Storytelling – e.g., encourage the child to tell you stories, turn their stories into picture books, tell group stories where each child shares and then lets another child share.</p>	<p>Working memory (i.e., keeping track of a series of events), creativity, bonding, emotional regulation, executive function.</p>
<p>Movement challenges – e.g., climbing and balancing, fast-slow-freeze dancing, songs that repeat and add, increasingly complex songs and games to keep children interested and challenged.</p>	<p>Coordination, executive function, focus, working memory, rhythm, creativity.</p>
<p>Quiet play – e.g., matching and sorting puzzles, increasingly complicated puzzles, helping with cooking and baking.</p>	<p>Visual working memory, follow rules, plan, focus and attention, impulse control.</p>
<p>Active experiences – e.g., put on plays from books or traditional stories, choose games that focus on cooperation and sharing.</p>	<p>Muscle strength, motor skills, sensory skills, language skills, cultural identity and belonging, emotional bonding, social development, creativity, self-expression.</p>



Play for Early School Age

Types of Play	What is Being Developed
<p>Card games and board game – e.g., memory games, matching games, speed games, simple strategy games (e.g. checkers).</p>	<p>Working memory, monitoring, attention, impulse control.</p>
<p>Physical activity/games – e.g., freeze dance, musical chairs; <i>Red Light, Green Light</i>; or <i>Duck, Duck, Goose</i> for younger children. Games that require the person who is “It” to mentally track others’ movements such as <i>Mother May I?</i> and <i>What Time Is It, Mr. Fox?</i> Games where children wait for a “magic word” to start an action, such as <i>Simon Says</i>. Ball games like soccer, dodgeball. Organized sports.</p>	<p>Attention, impulse control, selective responses, working memory.</p>
<p>Movement/song – e.g., copying songs, repeat-and-build songs/games, such as <i>Packing for a Picnic</i>. Singing in round, more complicated clapping and movement songs.</p>	<p>Working memory, impulse control, cognitive flexibility.</p>
<p>Quiet activities requiring strategy and reflection – e.g., guessing games, mazes, puzzle books, <i>I spy</i> games and books.</p>	<p>Working memory, flexible thinking (e.g., strategy games teach children to hold an existing idea in mind while they develop possible new ideas).</p>



Play for Grade School

Types of Play	What is Being Developed
Card games and board games – e.g., matching games, number games, strategy games, fantasy play.	Working memory and mental flexibility, planning and strategy, attention and quick decision-making, cognitive flexibility.
Physical activities/games – e.g., sports, jump rope, and hiding/tag games. For older children laser tag and paintball.	Working memory (e.g., hold complicated rules and strategies in mind), monitor their own and others' actions, impulse control, decision making, mental flexibility, focus.
Music, singing, and dance – e.g., learning a musical instrument, singing in pairs and rounds, dancing to simple choreography.	Selective attention, self-monitoring, coordination of working memory, cognitive flexibility, impulse control, coordination of movements.
Brain teasers – e.g., crossword puzzles, Sudoku, spatial puzzles (e.g. Rubik's Cube), computer games (e.g. <i>Cogmed</i> , <i>Lumosity</i>).	Working memory, mental use of letters and numbers, problem solving.



Play for Youth

Types of Play	What is Being Developed
Continued engagement in activities listed for other age groups – e.g., strategy games and logic puzzles, computer games (with time limits).	Self-regulation, focused attention, decision making, cognitive flexibility.
Creative expression – e.g., journaling, writing, sketching, and cartooning.	Self-awareness, reflection, planning.
Activities – e.g., sports, yoga and meditation, music, theatre.	Self-regulation, attention, working memory, cognitive flexibility.



Video Resources

Name and Link

Not a Box – Antoinette Portis

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=svINiELjDao>

How Every Child Can Thrive by Five

https://www.ted.com/talks/molly_wright_how_every_child_can_thrive_by_five?language=en

Building Brains is Child's Play

<https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/building-brains-is-childs-play>

This is Me: Article 31 and a Child's Right to Play

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tjRPWPhIfA>

What Play Can Teach Us – Jill VIALET

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=STYU-iz8bUQ>

The Power of Play

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RCxNtQ-t4M>



Resources

Resource	Link
Screen Time and Young Children – Canadian Paediatric Society	https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/screen-time-and-young-children?utm_source=chatgpt.com
Children and Physical Activity – Government of Canada	https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/being-active/children-physical-activity.html
Neufeld Institute	https://neufeldinstitute.org/
First Nations Health Authority - Growing up Healthy	https://www.fnha.ca/Documents/growingup.pdf

