



## Ten Reasons to Make Time for Play

How children learn is as important as what children learn—and what children learn and take away from play experiences is endless!

- 1. Play nurtures your child's healthy social-emotional development.** Playing with peers helps children become more emotionally aware. Children also practice self-regulation, empathy and understanding during play, which leads to more independent group management strategies like sharing, taking turns, etc... (Honig, 2007; Hirsch-Pasek, et al, 2009).
- 2. Your child practices everyday problem solving skills during play.** Problem-solving skills help determine goals and plan how to achieve them. Open-ended play experiences provide children with multiple opportunities to experiment, explore and manipulate objects and materials in different ways as they work towards a specific goal (AAP, 2007; Koenig, 2007).
- 3. Creativity and wonder spark from child-driven play.** According to David Elkind, Ph.D, "Self-initiated play nourishes the child's curiosity, imagination, and creativity, and these abilities are like muscles—if you don't use them, you lose them" (2008).
- 4. Play is integral to your child's academic success.** Children's language, early literacy, math and science understanding are stimulated from early play experiences. Block play and guided play provide children exposure to spatial and numerical concepts (Hirsch-Pasek, et al, 2009). Additionally, when a part of the child's academic environment, play helps nurture learning readiness and learning behaviors (AAP, 2007).
- 5. Active play nurtures your child's physical development.** "In contrast to passive entertainment, play builds active, healthy bodies" (AAP, 2007). Play also provides children opportunities to practice balance, dexterity and other still developing gross motor skills (Koenig, 2007).
- 6. Play provides your child with an outlet to explore, create and learn at her own pace.** Fred Rogers said, "When children build and make things, they can feel more in control not only of the outside world but their inner selves as well...they're creating from their own ideas!" (2002). Play also often allows children the opportunity to learn in a more relaxed, less pressured situation or environment.
- 7. Spending time together during play helps nurture your parent-child bond.** Elkind states that there are three basic drives that lead us to a full, happy and productive life. These are play, love and work. As you participate in your child's play, you communicate support and unconditional love to your child. You also demonstrates care and reassure your child that what he is doing is important (AAP, 2007; Elkind, 2008).

8. **Your child learns about himself and the world around him through play.** Play allows children the opportunity to interact, learn and ask questions about the world around them (NAEYC, 1997; AAP, 2007). “When we offer our children opportunities to explore this new and exciting world in their own time and at their own pace, we open them up to powerful learning experiences they could not encounter in any other way” (Elkind, 2008).
9. **See the world through your child’s eyes by simply watching her play.** Put yourself in your child’s shoes. Observe your child as she plays to get a better glimpse of what her skills and interests are. As you watch, think about “why” and “how” questions you might ask to challenge your child’s thinking or help her problem solve.
10. **Play is enjoyable and fun!** Children learn best through play perhaps because “Learning and play are not incompatible—learning takes place best when children are engaged and enjoying themselves” (Hirsch-Pasek, et al, 2009).

### Can you remember?

Think about your favorite play memory from childhood. What did you enjoy doing the most growing up? Was it an activity you did alone or with someone else? What made it enjoyable?

### References:

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- Elkind, David. (1981/1988/2001) *The Hurried Child*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hirsch-Pasek, K., Michnick Golinkoff, R., Berk, L. & Singer, D. (2009). *A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool*. (In-Press). Oxford University Press. New York.
- Koenig, Alice Sterling. (2007). “Play: Ten Power Boosts for Children’s Early Learning.” *Young Children*. September. NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).
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- Rogers, Fred. (2002). “Children’s Museums and the Role of Play.” Association of Children’s Museums Document.

### For more information on play and how children learn:

#### Books:

- Play=Learning: How Play Motivates and Enhances Children’s Cognitive and Social-Emotional Growth by Dorothy Singer, Ph.D, Roberta Golinkoff, Ph.D & Kathy Hirsch-Pasek, Ph.D (Eds.)
- The Hurried Child by David Elkind, Ph.D
- Einstein Never Used Flash Cards by Roberta Golinkoff, Ph.D & Kathy Hirsch-Pasek, Ph.D with Diane Eyer, Ph.D
- Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv
- Reclaiming Childhood: Letting Children Be Children in Our Achievement-Oriented Society by William Crain, Ph.D

#### Websites:

- DuPage Children’s Museum Blog, How Learning Comes in to Play! – <http://childrensmuseumblog.blogspot.com>
- Alliance for Childhood – <http://www.allianceforchildhood.org>
- Zero-to-Three – <http://www.zerotothree.org>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children – <http://www.naeyc.org>



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