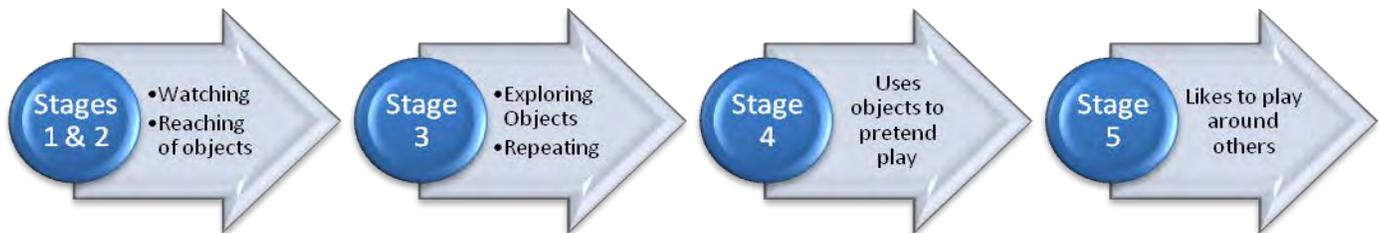


My Play: A Prime Time for Learning

“Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning... They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more...” ~ Fred Rogers (Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood)

Stages of Play

Play is a powerful and natural way for me to explore, learn, and build my skills as I grow.



- During Stages 1 and 2, I will begin by looking and reaching for people and items. I will start trying to figure out how objects work. I will use all my senses (touch, taste, hearing, sight, and smell) to play and learn about the people and objects around me. My mouth is often my best tool to explore a new object.
- Around the end of Stage 3, I will often repeat an activity to practice my new skills and learn how things work (cause and effect). I may dump and load boxes or baskets of toys over and over, or I might climb in and out of a sand box until I am tired.
- Around Stage 4, I will show interest in playing near other children my age. I will also use objects in a creative way. I may look through a toilet paper roll like a telescope, use a block as a phone, or push a basket across the floor like a truck.
- Around Stage 5, I will seek other children and adults to play and use the same play items with. I may offer toys to others, like pretend food and kitchen utensils. Or, I may enjoy dressing up in a simple costume.



How I learn to play

- The people in my life and the items around me are my first play items.
- When I'm younger, I will be more confident if I have a caregiver nearby.
- I need to explore and play with different items to learn about the world.
- I may repeat what I do many times until I'm ready to move on. I may ask you to read a story over and over again, or I may dump toys because I like the noise or watching them fall.
- I like to use different things in my play, especially items I see adults and other children using.
- I may try to play with my peers by handing them a toy, gesturing to them, or watching them. I may even talk to them or ask what they are doing.
- I will imitate adults and other children when I play.
- I like to pretend play, and I need time and objects to pretend with.
- I can begin to take turns in play, although this may still be difficult.



Dumping Toys

Parents and caregivers may see dumping toys as destructive. However, children are little scientists, and they learn powerful skills like cause and effect by dumping objects.

Help the child by creating a simple game with the dumped objects like dumping into another basket, or dumping the objects on different surfaces (loud, soft, bouncy, etc.).

Picking up can be a fun game too!

Learning to Share

Sometimes in the name of fairness, children are asked to share or give up a toy before they are finished. However, children under the age of three have no sense of possessions. They believe that if they have a toy, it's theirs. Instead of asking them to give it up, introduce sharing by modeling and talking about how to share by letting children finish their turn. Try saying something like "Joey would like to play with the truck when you are done. Can you hand it to Joey when you are finished playing?"

Stage 1 and 2 (Birth to around 6 months)

My caregivers support my play by:

- playing a variety of turn-taking games with me, such as peek-a-boo.
- allowing me to explore your face. This is one of my first favorite toys!
- imitating my vocalizations, facial expressions, and actions such as banging, cooing, smiling, and shaking.
- talking to me about what we are doing while we play.
- playing on the floor with me.
- letting me lead the play, and following my interest.



Stage 3 through Stage 5 (6 to around 36 months)

My caregivers support my play by:

- providing safe, open-ended materials to explore (like sand, mud, water, and play dough).
- talking to me about what my peers are doing during play, especially when you notice me trying to join them.
- providing lots of time for play. Find long periods of time to sit and play in the sand and water or pretend to bake a cake.
- providing toys and props based on my interest and culture. Accept the ways in which I decide to use them.
- staying near me and other children to help us with language and turn-taking while we are playing.
- using songs, finger plays, and music and movement to support play ideas.
- providing different places for me to play (outdoors, in parks, etc.).
- providing duplicates of desired toys and props when more than one child is in the room.
- keeping me safe in all experiences, both indoors and outside.

Renew-Reuse-Recycle

Reuse food boxes and containers by taping them closed and placing them on a low shelf. Find child-sized plastic cups, utensils, and cookware at a secondhand store for me to play with. A big box can be a great pretend oven!

Children and Television

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 2, and less than 2 hours per day for older children.

To learn more about play and learning, view the Resources and References found at the end of these materials.