

TYPES OF PLAY

Play is an important part of a child's life. It provides a purpose for the child. Children must play to help them grow. There are four basic areas of growth:

1. **PHYSICAL:** Play develops large and small muscles and increases speed, strength, and coordination.
2. **EMOTIONAL:** Children learn how to handle their feelings and fears through play. It gives them opportunities to try expressing emotions they have seen other people express.
3. **INTELLECTUAL:** Play teaches children how things work. They learn how to reason and solve problems as well as practice new mental skills.
4. **SOCIAL:** Play teaches children the type of social behavior that is acceptable in society. They find ways to get along with other people. They become more understanding of other people and learn to share and cooperate.

There are many types of play. Some general types are listed below.

DRAMATIC OR MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY

The child is involved in make-believe or imaginative situations. They may wish to play house, doctor, office, bank, or restaurant. This play is important in the development of a child because it teaches about real life situations and problem solving. It also teaches social interactions and behaviors. The child is able to express him/herself in a different role, which allows him/her to release pinned-in emotions. During dramatic play, children may act out things they have experienced such as happy moments, sad moments, fears, or anxieties.

ACTIVE PLAY

A child is involved in playing and interacting with others and/or with objects. A child needs to be involved in active play a majority of the time because children learn by actively playing. The term activity does not necessarily mean jumping up and down or running. A child can actively look at a book, put a puzzle together, look at the clouds and create images out of them, etc.

PASSIVE PLAY

Passive play is passive or noninteractive. A child does not interact with anyone or anything. There will be times when all children need to have passive play; when they are tired, angry, watching television, or just need a few minutes alone. However, when a child is passive and not interactive a great deal of the time, a caregiver needs to try to involve the child in some form of active play. Watching television is a great example of passive play. Children should be limited in the amount of passive play they are allowed to have.

SKILL MASTERY PLAY

This type of play occurs when a child learns or is beginning to learn a new skill. The child will continue to repeat the new skill over and over and over. Some examples of skill mastery play are rolling down a hill, riding a bike, skating, etc. A child will engage in the same play activity for hours. This allows for several developmental processes to take place. First, the child is mastering or perfecting a skill. Secondly, as the child is in the process of mastering the skill, he/she recognizes his/her progress and feels a sense of accomplishment. This builds self-esteem.

SENSORY MOTOR PLAY

This type of play utilizes the senses and motor skills. A child playing in sand, mud, water, play dough, saw dust, corn meal, packing material, ooblick, or any type of textural media is actively involved in learning about premath and prescience concepts. The way the matter feels, the way it pours or oozes, and the way it changes by combining it with other matter are important concepts for the child to learn.

ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE PLAY

This type of play can look a great deal like wrestling or fighting. When children are playing, their faces will represent happiness and their tone of voice will be pleasant. However, if there is anger or fear in their faces or voices, a caregiver needs to intercede. Rough-and-tumble play allows for a great release of energy as well as physical and social development.