

# Play

“It is a happy talent to know how to play.”  
— **Ralph Waldo Emerson**



## What is Play?

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics play teaches children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, agility, and physical, mental, and emotional strength, and is vital to healthy brain growth. It is through play that children learn to engage and relate in the world around them.

[pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/119/1/182)

## The Importance of Play

Research suggests a link between play and the development of cognitive and social skills that are requirements for learning more complex concepts as children get older. For example, play is linked to growth in memory, self-regulation, oral language, and recognizing symbols. Play has been linked to higher levels of school adjustment and increased social development. Play has also been linked to increased literacy skills and other areas of academic learning.

Educators of all ages hope that the children entering their classrooms can concentrate, pay attention, and be considerate of others. These areas are developed through interacting with peers during play.

<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/why-children-need-play-0>

Future Topics: Bullying, Diet, Activity & Exercise

## Structured Play

Structured play has a set of rules with specific objectives. When your child is engaged in structured play, s/he is seeking the most efficient way to achieve pre-existing objectives.

- ✓ card games
- ✓ board games
- ✓ classic outdoor games like red-light-green-light and tag
- ✓ puzzles
- ✓ following directions to assemble a toy, model airplane or Lego theme set
- ✓ organized sports—soccer, hockey, tennis, etc.

<http://spaghettiboxkids.com/blog/structured-vs-unstructured-play-is-that-what-really-matters/>

## Unstructured Play

Unstructured play or rather “free” play is open-ended with unlimited possibilities. When your child is engaged in unstructured play, s/he is in the process of establishing their own objectives free from rules or expectations.

- ✓ playing with blocks
- ✓ coloring, drawing or painting on blank paper
- ✓ deciding how to play with a toy airplane or doll
- ✓ inventing games to play
- ✓ running around the playground or park

<http://spaghettiboxkids.com/blog/structured-vs-unstructured-play-is-that-what-really-matters/>

## Making Time for Play

Children who commonly have their time filled for them, often have difficulty filling it for themselves. Today, it often seems as though every available moment of free time is filled with some type of organized activity or sport. Children move from their regular school day program to ice skating, soccer and/or art class, all before dinnertime. Children are learning how to be “schedule-juggling” adults at an early age which may deprive children of their personal creativity and imagination.

Free time allows for open-ended play, either alone or with others. Play dates that are left unstructured frequently allow for the free flow of communication and the opportunity to learn cooperative skills.

[http://www.parenthood.com/article/the\\_importance\\_of\\_play.html#.Vs\\_OCKvpxZg](http://www.parenthood.com/article/the_importance_of_play.html#.Vs_OCKvpxZg)



Compiled by Pattie Metheral

[patricia.metheral@sd68.bc.ca](mailto:patricia.metheral@sd68.bc.ca)

## Find a Balance

- ✓ Leave time for unstructured play
- ✓ Ask your kids what they want to do.
- ✓ Encourage them to use their imagination
- ✓ Include outdoor play whenever possible
- ✓ Look for a variety of structured activities for your kids – maybe try one activity each season?

<http://www.cbc.ca/parents/play/view/free-play-in-a-structured-world-how-to-balance-structured-and-unstructured>