

The Value of Play-Based Education for 3- and 4-Year Olds



Play-based early learning environments support school readiness by offering children space and time to learn organically through real-world interactions. Play directly supports the following skills necessary for academic success:

- **self-regulation** or the ability to manage emotions and practice self-control
- **creativity** or the ability to use imagination and exercise flexible thinking
- **attention processing** or the ability to focus and ignore distractions
- **problem solving** or the ability to identify, analyze, and solve dilemmas
- **cooperation** or the ability to negotiate and communicate effectively with others

Preschoolers learn more about mathematical, scientific, and literacy concepts during playful experiences in supportive child-centered environments than through formal instruction. Adults support play-based learning by expanding on children's individual strengths through scaffolding skill development and preparing the environment. Find examples of how play with high-quality materials support skill-building on the following page.

Learn more about play! Hear from child development experts on the importance of play in early childhood. Scan or click the following QR codes.

To learn about the extensive benefits of play...



The American Academy of Pediatrics

To learn about play as a protective factor...



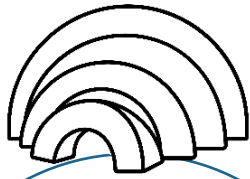
Center on the Developing Child
Harvard University

To learn about the educator's role in play...



The National Association for the Education of Young Children

How does play support learning? Below are examples of skills emerging through different types of play.

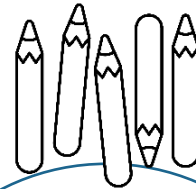
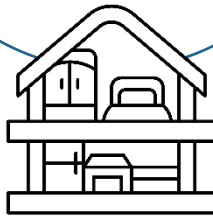


BLOCK PLAY

A few developing skills:
spatial relationships
measure objects
count and quantify

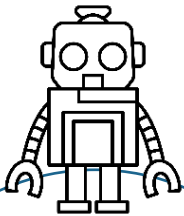
DRAMATIC PLAY

A few developing skills:
expressive language
empathy
storytelling



ART PLAY

A few developing skills:
self-expression
planning
symbolic thinking

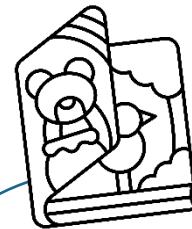


MANIPULATIVE PLAY

A few developing skills:
hand-eye coordination
persistence
sequencing & patterns

SENSORY PLAY

A few developing skills:
sensory integration
body awareness
self-regulation



PLAY WITH BOOKS

A few developing skills:
receptive language
phonological awareness
print concepts

