

Parachute Play

Parachute play enhances your toddler's ability to balance—a skill that translates to freedom and independence because it's a precursor to walking and running. Children will love a slip-and-slide parachute ride while you challenge his ability to balance while in motion. Parachutes are also interesting items because of their slick feel and bold colors which parents can use to reinforce their child's color-recognition skills.

Tossing a beach ball up in the air on the parachute will challenge your child's coordination and visual acuity. This type of play teaches your child about eye-foot coordination, eye-hand coordination and cause and effect.

-Toddler Play by Wendy S. Masi

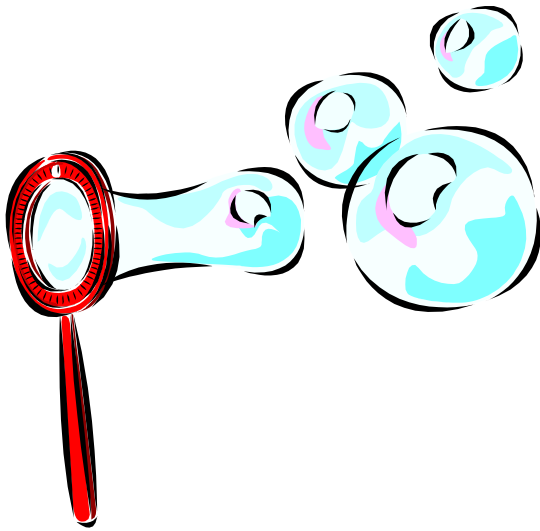
Don't have a parachute? The Portage Lake District Library has one available for loan and if you don't have a card from this library you may interlibrary loan it from your own library!



BUBBLES

Blowing, chasing, and popping bubbles is an excellent opportunity to encourage movement, stimulate eye-hand coordination, and introduce the concepts of high and low, big and small. If you toddler tries to blow the bubbles herself, she'll learn about cause and effect! In addition to being a lot of fun, bubble blowing strengthens the mouth muscles of beginning talkers!

-Toddler Play by Wendy S. Masi



Homemade Bubbles

2 cups dishwashing detergent
6 cups water
3/4 c. light corn syrup

Try Exploring with these Bubble Wands

- A clean funnel
- Plastic coat hanger
- Kitchen whisk
- Pipe cleaners
- Slotted spoon
- Empty thread spools
- Plastic berry basket
- Plastic rings from a 6 pack of pop

Water and Sand Play



Sand is wonderful for artistic expression because it allows the child to safely wallow in the medium from head to toe. Grasping and releasing the sand and using tools to manipulate it also exercise their fine motor skills and stimulate the sense of touch. It has been documented that play with sand and water can calm an agitated or upset child! It can allow them to express their thoughts and feelings.

Sand play promotes children's muscle skills, eye-hand coordination and can even help with social skills and problem solving when children work together to construct roads and castles. It is also a great way to teach children about cause and effect.

-Toddler Play by Wendy S. Masi

Art is Important



Art helps children think! They are learning about the world (color, size and shape of objects) as they paint, draw and scribble. They learn cause and effect and it gives them a chance to make decisions

Art allows for self-expression!

Art helps them to develop a sense of their own individuality, self-respect, and an appreciation for other's work. Ask your child to describe what they made.

Art develops physical skills!

The fine motor skills children learn while drawing and cutting are vital for later writing.

It's the process not the product!

Art is about the creating, not the creation. Focusing on an end result can actually limit their learning. Praise the effort that went into the creation and when possible hang it in your home.

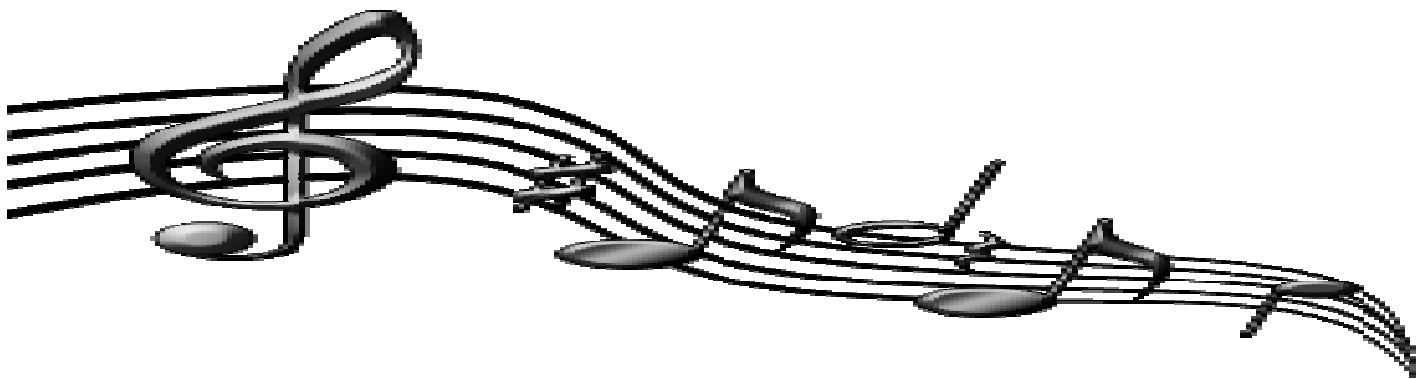


Ribbons and Music!

Music does more than entertain, it can kick start learning by creating new pathways in the brain!

- Look for opportunities to get your child rocking, marching, rolling, tapping, clapping and moving to the beat.
- Share songs that go along with simple hand motions such as “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” and use songs to help teach things like counting “This Old Man”, the alphabet “ABC’s” and rhyming “There was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly.”
- Music can also be calming and a source of comfort. When used as part of a routine it can help children to know what to expect and help them feel more secure.
- Using ribbon wands to dance to the music allows for creative expression, teaches hand-eye coordination, gross and fine motor skills and is great for cross-over activity!

Kidshealth.org



Kicking the Ball

Aiming for Success!

Selecting the appropriate size ball is important to the success of the activity and therefore the children's view of themselves. Balls should be lightweight. You may even want to deflate the ball a bit to make it easier to catch! If the ball is too small, the child may lack the necessary eye-foot coordination to successfully kick it when swinging their leg. Ensuring success is important because one way children evaluate themselves is through physical abilities.



-Delmar

Catching requires complex coordination of fingers, hands, arms and eyes, so expect short bursts of progress and incremental success. If they are not ready to catch the ball, you can begin the process by sitting on the floor and rolling the ball to her. Having her push the ball back teaches the concept of back and forth and gets them to track the ball visually.

- Wondertime.go.com

Cooking

Yes moms, cooking can be fun! At least for children! When children participate in cooking activities, they learn how food is prepared and how it contributes to their health and well-being. This is the time where they form eating patterns that can last a lifetime!

Children can learn so much from cooking activities.

- ◇ It can inspire curiosity and thinking.
- ◇ They develop problem solving skills through experimentation.
- ◇ They observe cause and effect.
- ◇ Children cannot cook without working on their physical development—spreading butter, squeezing lemons....
- ◇ Cooking can be used as an opportunity to learn new words like ingredients and recipe. You can even take pretzel dough and make letters with it!



OBSTACLE COURSE

Never underestimate the value of creating obstacle courses for children of all ages. Demonstrating concepts like over and under, around and through, up and down, inside and out can all be experienced through obstacle courses.

While children navigate the course they work on problem solving, motor skills, and even team building. Making the course physically challenging can also provide exercise and gross-motor development.



Obstacle courses help children build on their existing skills and help them to develop new strengths.

-Brain Based Early Learning Activities by Nikki Darling-Kuria

Growing and Learning

Watching a plant grow will strengthen observation skills and help children have a better understanding of cause and effect. Children can also learn about responsibility as they need to water their plants and give it sunshine!

Making gardening interactive:

- There are lots of books, songs and rhymes about planting and harvesting. Encourage creative thinking!
- Use gardening as an opportunity to learn numbers – count the seeds and the sprouts– and to recognize and recreate simple patterns—how many petals does that flower have? Did we plant in a row or in a circle?
- Growing things requires a range of large muscles and fine motor control—from digging to picking out seeds.



Pretend Play

Children learn by imagining and doing. When your child engages in pretend play, they are actively experimenting with the social and emotional roles of life. Through cooperative play, he learns how to take turns, share responsibility, and creative problem solving.

- By pretending to be someone else they may learn empathy.
- Your child also builds self-esteem when he discovers he can be anything just by pretending!
- Pretend play builds language skills

Nurture the imagination!

Children can pretend with just about anything!

Try:

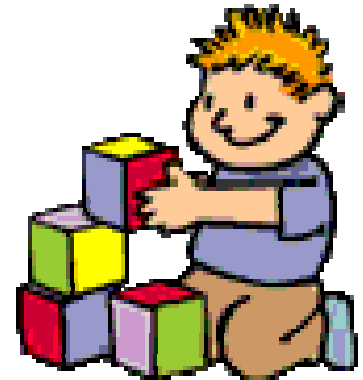


Large crates, boxes, and blocks
Old clothes, shoes and hats
Old telephones and books
Cooking utensils and dishes
Stuffed animals and dolls
Fabric pieces, blankets and sheets
Postcards and photos
Writing material

—scholastic.com

Watching My Child

As a parent, you probably wonder if your child's growth is normal. That's natural. And making sure is part of your responsibility.



No Two Children Grow Alike

In every way your child is an individual. That's true for his or her body size and growth pattern, too. Don't compare your child's growth to others.

Your Child May Grow Like You

The way your child grows depends a certain amount on genes. Consider the ways your family members grew when they were kids.

Watch Your Child's Growth Pattern

- A big change may be normal. Or it may signal a problem.
- A poor appetite for a long time may be a concern. If your child has energy, feels okay, and is growing normally, it's probably normal.
- Many children gain weight before they grow taller.



Watch me Grow

Kids like to see how they grow taller each year so consider a growth chart at home. You might find a closet door to mark your child's height on each birthday and 6 months later.

HANDPRINTS

Seeing a print of her own hand can help your child become more aware of herself as a unique person. Your child may enjoy tracking her growth by comparing her current handprint to ones she has made earlier.

Encourage your child to look at her handprints next to yours or other family members. You can point out that each handprint is slightly different, which makes each person special.

Invite her to have fun making handprints on various washable surfaces both indoors and outdoors—try the refrigerator, mirrors, or counter tops

Creative Curriculum Learning Games

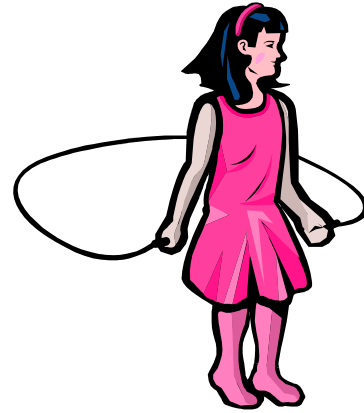


How Much Exercise?

Benefits of Outdoor Play

According to research (Fjortoft 2004; Burdette and Whitaker 2005), children who play outdoors regularly:

- ◇ Become fitter and leaner
- ◇ Develop stronger immune systems
- ◇ Have more active imaginations
- ◇ Have lower stress levels
- ◇ Play more creatively



How much ?

	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Frequency	Several times during hours the infant is awake	Multiple times during hours the toddler is awake	One or more bouts of structured physical activity along with multiple opportunities for unstructured physical activity
Time	Many opportunities throughout the day	Accumulate 30 minutes of structured physical activity throughout the day. Plus, an hour or more of unstructured indoor & outdoor physical activity across the day	Accumulate 60 minutes of structured physical activity throughout the day. Plus an hour or more of unstructured indoor & outdoor physical activity across the day

Guidelines for skill development:

	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Skill Development	Activities dedicated to exploring movement and the environment	Give ample opportunities to develop movement skills	Encourage to develop competence in motor skills

Creativity

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” ~ El-Pablo Picasso

ements used that can be further developed in the creative process:

- Self-expression: Children can express what they see, feel, hear, and think; it can help a child find their own unique style
- Curiosity: Children are allowed to follow through on their hunches, impulses, and natural desire to find out what things are, how they work, what will happen "if"
- Exploration/Experimentation: Children can try different ways to use an object, toy, or work on a project
- Imagination: Children are free to fantasize, engage in imaginative play, or come up with many possibilities for whatever they are focusing on, often trying things or coming up with possibilities we think are 'impossible'
- Open-ended thinking: Children are stretching their thinking skills by not having to come up with only one possible outcome or answer

How Can Adults Encourage Creativity?

- Provide an environment that allows the child to explore and play without undue restraints.
- Adapt to children's ideas rather than trying to structure the child's ideas to fit the adult's.
- Accept unusual ideas from children by suspending judgement of children's divergent problem-solving.
- Use creative problem-solving in all parts of the curriculum. Use the problems that naturally occur in everyday life.
- Allow time for the child to explore all possibilities, moving from popular to more original ideas.
- Emphasize process rather than product