

Why Play Matters



Everyone can enjoy play: babies, growing children, and adults. Having fun together is important. But play isn't just about fun. When a baby watches an adult's face or listens to their voice, he or she is starting to learn.



When we play we learn to:

- Explore
- Focus
- Concentrate
- Pay attention
- Imitate someone
- Try out something new
- Do the same thing hundreds of times
- Find out about our own feelings
- Get to know another person
- Learn what we can do
- Take turns
- Pretend
- Wait
- Imagine
- ...

Being in tune, relaxed and playful together helps babies to grow up healthy and secure. It's good for parents and carers too: playing together means growing together!



Different ages – different kinds of play

Copying an adult moving their eyebrows or their tongue is a game even very young babies can enjoy.

Tickle games like 'Round and round the garden' can be exciting for growing babies. Notice when your baby looks away or stops laughing - he or she may need a bit of down time before they're ready for the next round of interaction.

'Peekaboo' and 'Hide and Seek' are games that help children manage feelings about people coming and going... Soon they'll be ready to tease you by hiding something and watching to see how you respond.

Babies love emptying out bags and drawers- turn this into a game of 'Inside and Outside' that you can enjoy together.

You can encourage your child to be curious and to learn about the world in a safe way by introducing a few toys at a time and noticing your child's discoveries.

Having a place for messy play with playdo, sand, paint or glue helps children to feel confident about trying new things.

Bath time is a great time for exploration and early experiments with what water does and where it can go.

Playing with rhyming words and singing songs helps children with their language and learning.

Playing with dolls and small animals is a way for children to try out their ideas and talk about feelings.



7 Top Tips for Watch Me Play!

- 1. Watch your child play- you'll get new ideas from him or her**
- 2. Have a regular 'special play time' with your child – let the child take the lead, and wait to be invited to join in**
- 3. Try simple toys that let your child use their imagination**
- 4. Provide a quiet space for play without TV or computers**
- 5. Help your child move to a new activity by singing a song together**
- 6. Keep your child's drawings and paintings in a special place or a folder**
- 7. If playing together feels hard to do, talk to another adult in the family, or to your health visitor**