



Penn State Better Kid Care Distance Education Lesson

- How to Turn Good Play
into GREAT Play

Professional Development Code K2C2
Child Development Associate CDA 2

How to Turn Good Play into GREAT Play

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Assignments & Required Forms



Lesson Instructions

1. Watch the educational video.
2. Read the workbook.
 - Plan time each day to work on the lesson.
 - Set a goal to complete the lesson in about two weeks.
3. Complete all assignment pages and forms written in ink. Save a copy of all completed work for your files in case there is a need to refer to your saved copy. We will no longer return incomplete lessons. You will be notified if lessons are incomplete.
4. We encourage the use of distance education lessons in staff meetings; however, all assignments need to be completed independently. Copied answers, “does not apply” answers, or incomplete assignments are considered not complete.
5. **To avoid delays in processing your registration for this professional development, be sure to go over the check list on the Registration Form, include all items, and mail to :**

Penn State Better Kid Care
Distance Education Program
341 North Science Park Road, Suite 208
State College, PA 16803

Please note:

- Two professional development hours will be given for successful completion of this lesson.
- Completed assignments will be checked and returned to you with a certificate of completion.
- Training developed by Penn State University Better Kid Care Distance Education provides:
 - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Keystone STARS professional development
 - PA Dept. of Public Welfare required hours
 - Act 48 hours for certified educators
 - Child Development Associate (CDA) credential hours
- Completed assignments must arrive at the Penn State Better Kid Care office for processing at least **6 weeks** before your certification or registration renewal due date.
- The video portion of this lesson was a previous satellite broadcast. Discussion questions are included in most lessons. They can be used by a group of staff members in a child care center or group home. They can also be used in planning a family night to help spark discussion among families.
- If you are completing this as a Web-based lesson, please refer to the online instructions at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/AngelUnits/GeneralDirections.html>

How to Turn *Good Play* into *GREAT Play*



Important Information about This Lesson

The video portion of this distance education lesson involves working on handouts provided in the workbook. Be sure to have the handouts in the workbook ready to use. You will be encouraged to discuss your results in a group setting. If that is not possible, be thinking of how to apply what you are learning in your early learning program.

After you have viewed the video and gone through the exercise handouts, you are ready to begin your assignments. The assignments will involve your active participation as you apply the goals learned in the lesson.

Mail **only** your completed assignments (**not the handouts**) and required forms to the Better Kid Care office for review. See Registration Form for a check list of all required items.



How to Turn Good Play into GREAT Play

Distance Education Lesson Overview

The distance education lesson “How to Turn Good Play into Great Play” will first take a developmental look at play to help you understand what types of play skills can be expected from typically developing children of various ages. You will have an opportunity to observe and assess children’s play skills, using an assessment scale in the handouts. There will be opportunities to see and hear from early learning practitioners as they model the adult’s role in helping children enhance their play skills.

Distance Education Lesson Objectives

- Participants will be able to describe some typical developmental play stages for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
- Participants will be able to describe three ways to enhance children’s play.
- Participants will be able to assess children’s play skills and determine if intervention is needed.
- Participants will be able to develop a strategy for working with young children who are not playing on a developmentally appropriate level.

How to Turn Good Play into GREAT Play

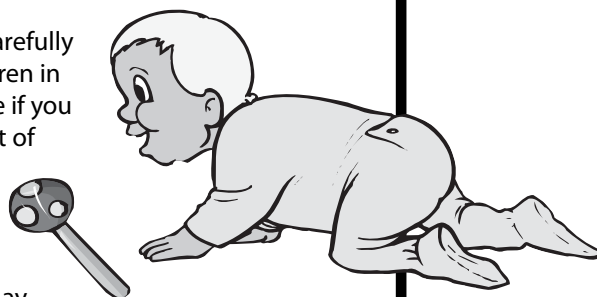
During the preschool years, the play of most young children becomes increasingly social. Infants play by themselves (solitary play). As they become toddlers they begin to play sitting side by side, but still independently (parallel play). Around the age of three, play becomes more social and children move into acting out simple familiar roles like mommy and daddy together (sociodramatic play). By the later preschool years, children are capable of acting out more complex roles together, such as astronaut and veterinarian.

Not all children follow this progression. While older children will sometimes play by themselves, solitary play reduces over time for most children in child care as they gain more play skills. Some children are shy or withdrawn during the preschool years. This early social withdrawal is associated with a number of problems in later childhood and adolescence: peer rejection, social anxiety, loneliness, depression, and negative self-esteem. Nonsocial play also seems to be related to poorer academic achievement.

Also disturbing is the pattern seen in some lower income groups. The typical increase in social play that you would expect to find in the preschool years may not happen. Instead, many children get stuck in parallel play, playing alongside others but not interacting.

One thing you can do is to carefully observe the play of the children in your program and determine if you see the healthy development of typical play skills. Support play by offering sufficient time for play. Forty-five to sixty minutes at a time is usually needed for good play. Offer interesting props to play with. One teacher noticed the children's interest in pretending to be bears, so she put out some lengths of fake fur from the fabric store. Supporting play with time and props is often all you need to do to help children who are already successful players to develop rich social play over time.

Solitary Play



Parallel Play



Sociodramatic Play





Stages of Children's Play

Read the following descriptions of children's play and then check which age group this child is likely to be in.

	Age Groups (check one)		
	Infant	Toddler	Preschooler
A child takes blocks, drops them one-by-one into a bucket, and then dumps the bucket, spilling out the blocks.			
A child mouths a baseball-size ball that has bumps on it.			
A child holds a block and tips it over, saying, "Do you want some milk?"			
A child holds a block next to his face and says, "Over and out."			
A child builds a tower with blocks and then knocks it down and shouts with glee.			
A child stacks blocks next to another child who is making her own tower of blocks.			
A child plays peek-a-boo with an adult.			
A child says, "I'll just take your temperature, it won't hurt a bit" to a stuffed bear he is holding.			
A child pushes a shopping cart and puts empty food cartons into it.			
A child crawls across the floor to you, rubs against your leg, and begins to meow.			



Guide to Observing and Assessing Children's Play

	Yes	No	Notes
Does the child play by him or herself most of the time?			
Does the child play side-by-side with others most of the time in parallel play?			
Does the child play socially with others?			
Can the child play pretend while using objects? For example, can she pretend to go grocery shopping by putting the empty milk carton into the toy shopping cart?			
Can the child pretend to be someone else?			
Can the child pretend that an object is something that is not?			
Can the child interact with another person in play?			
Can the child make a verbal declaration about a pretend role: "I am the mommy" or "I am the daddy"?			
Can the child pretend, rather than using an object, such as drinking out of an imaginary cup?			
Can the child use speech instead of action: "Let's pretend I went to the store"?			
Can the child use language to describe situations: "Let's pretend we are on a trip"?			
Can the child continue the play for at least ten minutes?			

Helping Children Become Better Players

The best way to help children to become better players is to join in the play yourself. This works well with a child who is not playing at age level or who needs social skills to effectively join in with others. Through playing with children you can help them learn to take on roles and develop some skills to interact with others.

How do you do this? By taking a role yourself and acting it out with the kids. You don't have to direct the play, just be a part of it. Respond to the ideas of the kids and suggest some simple ideas. You can help children imagine by using the skills of imagination. For example, pretend a block is an ice cream cone. Offer more ideas to act out. After firefighting play you might act out sleeping.

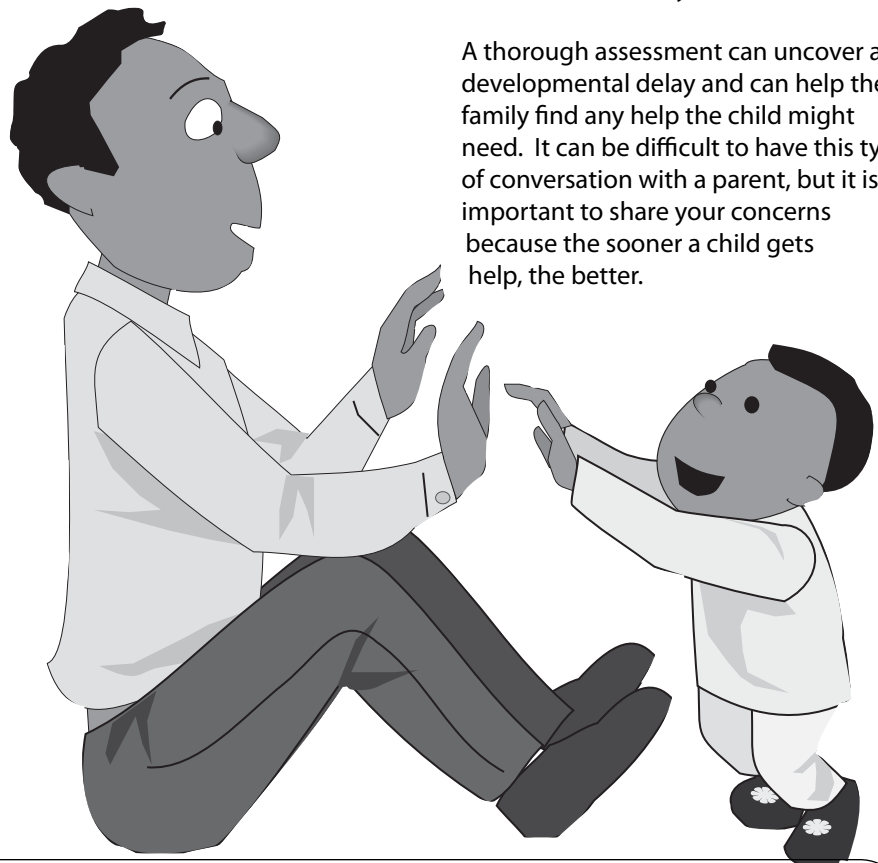
You can also help expand children's play skills by reading to them about the roles they like to play. Read books about space exploration to children who are interested in playing astronaut. This can give them new ideas for play. You can also talk with children about the roles they are playing. While superhero play is popular, it can be limited because children believe the only thing superheroes do is fight. You can expand the children's play by discussing other things that superheroes might do, like sleeping, cooking, and fixing their gear. This can help children grow more complex in their play.

Going back to an earlier stage of play can help most children. Try favorite baby games like peek-a-boo or lap games with a toddler or older child. If it captures their interest this is usually a sign that they can benefit from more of this type of play. Try build-and-knock-down games with preschoolers. This game is a toddler favorite, but might be interesting to children who need more time spent in toddler play. The goal is to help children play now so they can eventually move on to the other stages of play.

Concerned about a Child's Play Skills?

If you notice that a child is not playing at age level and your involvement doesn't seem to be helping, share what you have noticed with the parents. Be specific about describing the behaviors you have observed and then suggest that the parent ask their pediatrician for a developmental assessment. This is usually covered by health insurance under most plans. You also may have free developmental screenings available in your community. Many are sponsored by school districts; check around to find out what is available in your area.

A thorough assessment can uncover any developmental delay and can help the family find any help the child might need. It can be difficult to have this type of conversation with a parent, but it is important to share your concerns because the sooner a child gets help, the better.



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Developed by the Penn State Better Kid Care Program
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Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director, Lyn Horning, Assistant Director of Programs



PARENTS COUNT

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS



Stages of Play

Making a Playful Home

Go on—be silly with your kids! Spend some time playing with your children every day. It's good for you and your kids. It helps your kids grow emotionally, socially, mentally, and physically. Best of all, playing can reduce stress in the home. Play can help you relax and enjoy family time and can give you some great memories to share together.

Try these surefire hits with children of different ages: Babies love peek-a-boo. Its more advanced version, hide and seek, is loved by children of all ages. Try build-up-and-wreck-down games with toddlers. Nothing seems to delight them more than stacking blocks and knocking them over. With your young preschooler, try playing house. Pretend to cook, eat, and sleep; that's all you need for a satisfying play time with this age group. Older preschoolers enjoy imaginative games like pretending to be their favorite character. Children grow so fast—take the time to play today!



Play Is the Way

Did you know there is one thing your child should do every day to help her succeed in school, to be able to get along with other children, and to grow emotionally? Play is the way.

What can you do to make sure your children are getting the play they need to grow? First, make time for children to play. Many children have little to no time to play in their lives. Choose a child care provider who understands the value of play for young children and who gives children plenty of time to play however they want to. Then set aside other time during the week for play. Children under the age of five benefit more from time spent playing than they do from time spent in classes or organized sports, so save your money and give kids what they really need: time spent playing.

There is plenty of time for children to pursue special interests once they are out of the early childhood years.

You don't have to spend lots of money on toys to support your child's play. Many toys don't have much real play value. Toys with batteries are usually interesting for only a short time before children lose interest. Many of the best toys are not toys at all. One caregiver noticed that the children in her care were "making" cupcakes in the sandbox, so she brought outside her muffin tins and they endlessly filled the tins with sand. Simple things like blankets, pillows, and boxes give children many hours of happy play.

Play with your infant and toddler. They really benefit from the time spent interacting with you. As your child grows older, invite playmates over to play. Around the age of three, when children become more social in their play, they begin to enjoy having a special friend for play. Remember, play dates like these are most successful when they are shorter rather than longer. Help children learn to talk with each other about their differences rather than fighting.

Expand your child's play by reading to him about the things he's most interested in. If you have a child who loves trucks, ask your librarian for books about construction that are at the right age level. Visit construction sites together and suggest that your child try playing some of the new ideas. For instance, you might say, "Let's pretend they are building a bridge" and then see if your child is interested in the idea. Play can become more and more complex as kids learn more and more. Your attitude matters. If you believe play is a valuable way for children to spend their time, children will gain the most from their time spent playing.

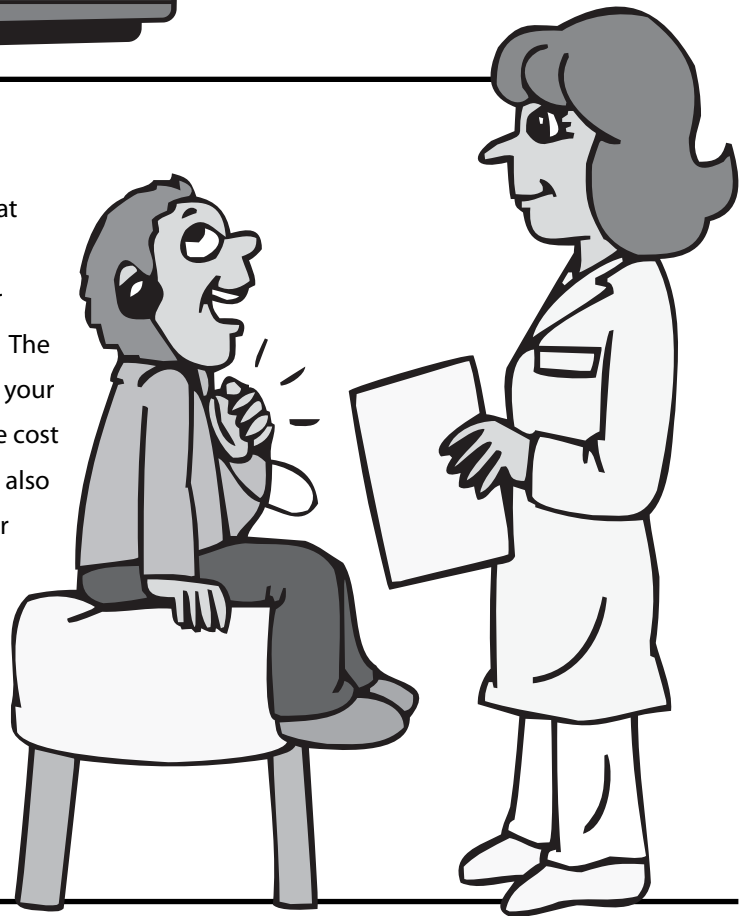
Turn off the TV

Children need play time every day. With our busy schedules children do not always get this time. Children get much more from time they spend playing than they do from time spent watching TV, so make sure they have more play time than TV time. Why do kids gain more when they play than when they watch TV? Because children learn much more when they move their bodies and use their imaginations.

**Children need
play time
every day.**

Is My Child OK?

If you are concerned about your child's ability to play, what should you do? If you have noticed that your child is not playing the way you would expect, you can talk with your child's pediatrician. Ask for a developmental assessment. The pediatrician can refer you to a specialist who will observe your child at play to understand your child's development. The cost of this is normally covered by most health insurance. You also may have free developmental screenings available in your community. Ask your pediatrician about these services.



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Discussion Questions

1. Why is play valuable for young children?
2. What can you do to enhance play at the different ages, during infancy, toddlerhood, and during the preschool period?
3. Discuss how play becomes more social over time.
4. What can you do to help the children who are at the stage of parallel play move to more cooperative play?
5. Describe your role in children's play.
 - 5a. How can you set up your room for play?
 - 5b. Talk about what happens to play when you add props.
 - 5c. What kinds of props are good?
 - 5d. Talk about using questions to expand play.
6. Talk about the importance of following the lead of the children in play.
7. Discuss why we shouldn't correct children in play.
8. How can you help children communicate during play?
9. How can you help bring a child into the play with other children?
10. Talk about your most common play problems and what you can do about them.



Assignments

Name
Address
City/State/ZIP
County
Phone Number

BKC OFFICE USE ONLY

1. Tell us why play is valuable for young children.

2. Describe three ways that you can help a child to successfully enter the play.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. How can you make superhero play positive?



Assignments (continued)

Name

4. Use the chart on Handout 3 to observe and assess the play skills of two children in your care and then answer the questions.

Child 1 - Please list child's age _____

What did you learn about this child and his or her play skills? Describe your observations.

Do you think this child is playing on an appropriate level for his or her age?

If not, what level do you think this child is playing on? _____

Why do you think this?

List two things you can do to enhance this child's play.



Assignments (continued)

Name

Child 2 - Please list child's age _____

What did you learn about this child and his or her play skills? Describe your observations.

Do you think this child is playing on an appropriate level for his or her age?

If not, what level do you think this child is playing on? _____

Why do you think this?

List two things you can do to enhance this child's play.



Assignments (continued)

Name

5. Spend time encouraging children to get help from each other.

What did you do and how did the children respond?

What benefits do you think the children will gain from this?



Tell Us More About You...

Since we can't meet face to face, we are interested in knowing more about you. This information is very helpful to the early education specialists who review your assignments. Please return this sheet with your assignment pages.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- q* I provide child care in my own home
- q* I provide child care in someone else's home
- q* I work in a child care center
- q* I'm thinking about becoming a child care provider
- q* Other, please describe

2. How long have you been a child care professional? _____

3. What are the ages of the children in your care? Check all that apply.

- q* Birth to 12 months
- q* 13-24 months
- q* 25-36 months
- q* 3 years
- q* 4-5 years
- q* 6-8 years
- q* 9 years and over
- q* Special needs

4. Please feel free to tell us a little about yourself and/or the work you do with children.

5. Other comments (please use the back of this page if necessary).

**Thank you for taking the time to help us make a connection to you
and for being part of our program!**



**Penn State
Better Kid Care Program**

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