



The Basics of Caring for Children In Your Home

Learning Through Play

“All they do is play all day.” “Don’t they ever learn anything?”

Did you ever hear these comments from parents? To an adult, it does look like children are just playing all day.

Play has a very different meaning to children. To a child, play is learning. Play is not something children do when they don’t have anything better to keep busy.

Children are interested in things around them. Set out a new toy and watch a young child explore it. She carefully looks at it, feels it, shakes it, puts it in her mouth, tries to take it apart, sits on it, steps on it...This child is learning about the toy and herself as she plays and explores.

Learning Skills Takes Time

A child doesn’t learn to walk overnight. He takes small steps at first. Then moves on to walking. Learning other skills happens over time too. Did you know that building with blocks, putting puzzles together, and scribbling on paper help children learn to write? There are a lot of little steps before real writing begins.

A lot of parents today are very concerned with wanting their children to read and write at an early age. What they don’t understand are the steps that children must take to get to the point where they can read and write. Teaching pre-school children to read and write by using flash cards and worksheets is not a good way for them to learn. These steps are best done in a child’s own way, through play.

Learning takes time —
step by step



Here are some ways children learn and grow through play

<i>When children play with</i>	<i>They are learning</i>	<i>This leads to</i>
Blocks	How different sizes and shapes fit together	Math skills
Small blocks	Control of small muscles in their hands — picking up and moving objects	Writing skills
Pop-up toys	How things work — cause and effect	Thinking skills
Puzzles	To look for what's different between the background and the picture	Reading and writing skills
Beads to string	How to use their hands and eyes together	Writing skills
Paint — mixing colors	Cause and effect	Science skills
Pens, pencils, markers and crayons	Control of small muscles in their hands; Making marks to express their ideas	Writing skills
Water	To explore the size and shape of containers with different amounts of water	Math and science skills
Wet and dry sand	Cause and effect — water changes sand to something new and different	Science skills
Dress-up clothes, pretending to be adults	Ways to think about how others act, think, and feel Ways to handle problems, Turn taking, cooperation	Using the imagination Problem solving skills
Clay	Control of hand muscles, use of sense of touch, use of imagination	Writing skills Problem solving skills

The next time a parent asks you, "Don't the children do anything besides play all day?" Answer them firmly, "They play all day because that's the way they learn."

Play is learning

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