



The importance of play-based learning

Why is a play-based approach important?

Play is the way most humans, but especially young children, make sense of their world. Play-based learning is an important way to develop active learning. Active learning means using your brain in lots of ways.

When children play, they

- Explore the world – natural and social
- Develop and practise social and language skills that may be more complex than in everyday activities
- Expand and challenge their physical skills
- Experiment with new ideas including symbolic competence required for formal learning
- Enhance their self-confidence
- Think and express themselves creatively
- Respond to experiences with or without language
- Develop their sense of self and identity.





What does play look like?

- Children may play on their own in solitary play; alongside someone else but independently in parallel play or with other children in cooperative play
- Play may be structured, where someone else makes the rules and decisions
- Play may be unstructured, where the child is self-directed or takes all the initiative.

What can children learn in play?

- positive attitudes of self-motivation and self-direction
- self-confidence
- cooperation and group values
- curiosity, persistence and concentration
- language and numeracy.

We can support children's play by

- allowing for extended periods of time for children to remain in 'the flow' of their play
- providing resources such as safe household items and materials
- making enough space to focus on the play activity
- catering for choices of activity, materials and equipment
- role-modelling to encourage and extend ideas
- challenging them with more complex thinking, novel ideas or experiences

More information is available from
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