

Torryburn Nursery

Learning Through Play at Home



What's happening when children are playing?

Play is whatever your child does in order to satisfy their desire to learn. Children need play to thrive and make sense of their world. Sometimes your child's play will replicate real life experiences, sometimes fantasy and often a mixture of both. 'Just playing' can help build more resilient children!

As they grow and develop, play offers children the opportunity to develop a range of physical, emotional and social skills, helping them make sense of the world they find themselves in.

Play builds health and wellbeing – being active through play helps children physically and emotionally, contributing to their health and happiness.

Play builds brain connections and supports a range of learning skills.

Play builds resilience – playing boosts children's confidence, creativity, problem-solving skills and perseverance, enabling them to cope with stress and challenges throughout life.



The Power of Play at Home

Play builds your child's:

- **EMOTIONAL skills:** understand, manage and express emotions.
- **PHYSICAL skills:** understand movement and space through practising motor skills.
- **SOCIAL skills:** communicate and understand other people's point of view through negotiating rules and building empathy.
- **COGNITIVE skills:** concentration, problem-solving and flexible thinking.
- **CREATIVE skills:** coming up with ideas, expressing them and making them a reality.



CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO REST AND PLAY

As parents how can we support our child's learning through play?

This starts with valuing children's play. Play covers a wide range of activities and is a very serious business. The child who wants to do a flip on the trampoline at home will stay outside for hours trying different techniques— this is play. The child who wants a light for the top of their police car will persevere with batteries, wires and bulbs until they achieve success— this is play. The child who wants to bake a cake will discuss and read the recipe, measure out ingredients and bake— this is play!

No parent or carer has ever had to tell a child, what, where, when and how to play.

Throughout history, children have been pursuing their own interests, ideas and challenges in their own home and surrounding environment.



“When life throws you a rainy day, play in the puddles.”

-Winnie the Pooh

Ways to Play

To be happy and healthy, children need a range of play opportunities both indoors and out.

Here are some of the kinds of play children can get up to in and around the home. Older children don't always refer to what they are doing as 'play' – and neither do adults – but most of us have things that we choose to do, in our free time that makes us feel happier. Often, that could be described as play.

Making things: drawing, painting, building things, making models, making dens outside.

Active play: running, jumping, chasing, skipping and making up games.

Getting wet or mucky: playing in the mud, rain or sand.

Interactive digital playing: computer games, using apps and staying connected to others

Quiet play: day dreaming, imagining, inventing, hiding.

Riding around: cycling, skating or scooting.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Even if we can't get out and about as much at the moment, it is really important for children to go outside for some time every day.

Research shows that playing outdoors is good for mental health. Time spent outside physiologically reduces anxiety. Giving your child the opportunity to play outside can have a really positive impact on their opportunities to learn about the world around us.



Learning Through Play at Home Activities

Homemade Paint

You will need:

- soap flakes
- Warm water



Beat together soap flakes and warm water to make a mixture that is the consistency of whipped potatoes! Add food colouring of your choice.

Use your paint for finger painting, foot painting or brush/straw painting. Use objects in your home or found outside to print with.

Store the paint in airtight containers. Paints made with soap flakes are easy to wash off clothes and surfaces.

Homemade Playdough

You will need:

- 1 1/4 cup of flour
- 1/2 cup of salt
- 1/2 cup of water



Combine the flour and salt, and slowly mix in the water. Work the mixture into a smooth dough with your fingers.

The benefits of playing with playdough:
Fine Motor Skill Development: When your child squishes, rolls, flattens, shapes, scores or cuts play dough, it will develop and strengthen the hand muscles. The strengthened hand muscles helps improve fine motor skills of your child, improving writing.

Homemade Bubbles

You will need:

- 18 fl.oz of water
- 2 fl.oz washing up liquid
- 4 teaspoons of sugar

Blow the bubbles through a straw. For coloured bubbles, add food colouring.

The benefits of playing with bubbles:
Hand/eye coordination: It takes serious practice to link up what the eyes and hands are doing in order to accurately dip and blow with a wand.
Physical act of blowing: This can be a very effective way to help your child calm their body.

Stick Art



You will need to collect:

- Sticks of various sizes and lengths
- Small stones, gravel, fir cones etc

Talk to your child about the different kinds of art they could make and create with the sticks. Give your child freedom to create independently and encourage them to talk about their ideas. Talking to your child during these activities builds their vocabulary.

Make Tiny Worlds for Toy/Stick People and Animals

How about taking your child's toy people or animals out for an adventure to a new land?



Perhaps the people would like a stick fort in the woods or the animals would like a new farm or a zoo at the bottom of the garden or at the park. Maybe you turn a tray/tub into a new land in your home? It could be a fairy house or Elf Castle!

Using nature's art box...



Learning Through Play at Home Activities

Golf/Hockey



You will need

- Small ball or deflated balloon
- Kitchen towel tube or rolled up newspaper
- Cardboard box or hoola hoop or paper target or a bowl/cup on its side on the floor.

Encourage your child to get the ball or balloon into the target.

Move the target into different positions in your home. You could make it trickier by adding some obstacles to get around before reaching the target. Give each target a number. Add up the scores

Volley Balloon



You will need:

- Two chairs
- Wool or string or a skipping rope
- Balloon or a soft ball

Set up two chairs facing back-to-back with a piece of string between them. Blow up a balloon and stand with it opposite your child. Show our child how to hit the balloon with both hands to make the balloon go over the string and encourage them to do the same back. Volley the balloon back and forth trying not to let it touch the ground.

Scavenger Hunt

You will need:

- Items you can find around the house, e.g., ball, hat, pencil, cup, sock, spoon.

Hide items around the house or outside. Give your child a list (use pictures) and they can tick off when they have found the item.

You can also give clues for the items to be found, e.g., "You wear this is your foot."



Stepping Stones



You will need:

- Pen/ pencil
- Old newspaper sheets or a roll of wallpaper or paper

Cut out twelve shapes from an old newspaper or a roll of wallpaper to make stepping stones that are large enough for two feet to stand on.

Number or write letters/sounds on the shapes. Place them on the floor in a circle or make a path with them leading to the sink. Ask your child to read the numbers or letters in one direction identifying the numbers and letters/ sounds each time they step.

Physical Activity

The first seven years of a child's life are the most influential in establishing good exercise habits and setting the foundation for continued learning throughout life.

Everything a child does is related to exercise whether that is talking or walking!



Establishing daily exercise routines from an early age helps children to become strong and healthy as they grow. This helps them to develop their self-esteem and therefore motivates them to 'have a go' at new activities and learning

Obstacle courses...

Set up a course *with your child* inside or out, which can be travelled over, under, around, through and along.

Obstacle Course ideas...

- Crawl through a cardboard box or blanket tunnel
- Crawl over or under a table or a soft cushion
- Climb up or walk along a row of chairs and jump down
- Zig zag in and out of a row of food tins



Play is often thought of as a child's work and anyone watching a child absorbed in their play can see how hard they work.

PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM SERIOUS LEARNING. BUT FOR CHILDREN PLAY IS SERIOUS LEARNING. PLAY IS REALLY THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD.
-FRED ROGERS

Looking after yourself

*"When you take away the phone and email and you don't have a million things to run around to, it allows your mind the **space** to think more about the things that matter."*

Ewan McGregor, actor



Being a parent isn't easy, so it's important to look after yourself as well as your child. Make sure you get time to yourself – even if that's a cup of tea and reading a magazine.



"The most valuable lesson that I learned from my sons when they were young was that they didn't want to listen or be taught by me, but they did want to play with me.

So, I created fun games that did the teaching for me- the way that kids learn through play that is unstructured and natural. I pass this onto parents too- playing actively with your kids is good parent-child bonding."

Judy Murray



Thank you for reading about
Learning Through Play at Home

