

PLAY to Learn



Keeping it fun and
helping them to
enjoy learning!

HOW DO YOUNG CHILDREN PLAY?

Play brings children happiness and builds confidence that they can take into other areas of their lives.

BABIES (birth to 18 months)

- Enjoy playing on their own or with their parents and caregivers.
- Learning about their world and understand it better through play.
- Play by themselves, with their own hands or feet or with toys that they can manipulate to move.
- Can manage only short bursts of intensive play, which can be tiring and effortful.

TODDLERS (18 months to 3 years)

- Practicing their independence physically through their play (they can move away from parent/caregiver) and verbally (saying “no”).
- Start to play alongside other children.
- Enjoy a play space that offers them the opportunity to run, and / or practice other physical skills.
- Learning about friendships and may have some preferred, familiar playmates, but are not yet sharing or playing collaboratively with peers.
- Often like to do the same thing over and over before moving on to new things.
- Are ready to move on when they feel really secure with what they know.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (three to five years)

- Learn a lot about who they are, how they fit in and how to get along with others through playing with their peers
- Engage in more pretend play where a toy or a child can represent many things, for example, a branch could be a magic wand or sword.
- Start to make up rules for games, ie, who can be what and what they must do. Games often break up at this early stage because someone wants different rules and children don't yet have the skills to negotiate their differences.