



BETTER
KID CARE
PROGRAM



Family Time Work Time

A B A L A N C I N G A C T

BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES

Play Is Fun and So Much More

When children play, they have fun, but there is so much more going on. Children learn to think, use their imaginations, try out ideas, practice grown-up behavior, and learn self-control while playing.

Take time to watch your child when she plays. Listen to her. You will learn a lot about your child and what she is thinking. When you take time to be part of your child's play, it shows her that you think play is important. While doing things together, you will also notice ways to make your child's play even better.

What Children Are Learning when They Play

- When your child plays he is growing mentally, socially, emotionally, and physically.
- Playing with blocks teaches your child math and science skills. Exploring sizes and shapes helps with geometry. Block play also introduces things such as gravity, stability, weight, and balance.

- When your child plays with cars and trucks, he is learning the science concepts of velocity and momentum.
- Putting together a puzzle helps with problem solving, shapes, sizes, and colors.

- Sand and water play help children learn problem-solving skills, measuring, and fine motor skills. **Note:** When young children are near any source of water you should remember to use "touch supervision," which means always being within an arm's length of your child.
- Pretend play teaches problem solving, practicing adult roles, language skills, and social skills.
- If anyone says that your child is "just playing" tell them that he is learning math, science, problem solving, and language skills!



Top Ten Super Toys

Guess what? You do not need to spend a lot of money for your child to have good toys. The toys listed below are inexpensive. Some are even free! They are everyday items you might not think of as a toy and can be used by kids of all ages. Here is our **Top Ten List of Super Toys:**

1. Cardboard boxes: Any size empty box will do. Boxes big enough for your child to get inside are great fun and those with lids are even better.

2. Blankets: Use a blanket to make a tent for pretend camping play, playing peek-a-boo, or to have a pretend picnic.

3. Blocks: Blocks appeal to children from infants through school-age. They can be made of old milk cartons, cardboard, foam, or wood. Young children enjoy building block towers. Older children build structures and even miniature towns.

4. Water: Water play is soothing for children and enjoyed by all ages. Tod-

dlers and preschoolers can “help” wash dishes or simply play with water in a tub. Use recycled plastic containers to let your child practice pouring. **Note: When young children are near any source of water you should remember to use “touch supervision,” which means always being within an arm’s length of your child.**

5. Balls: Have soft ones for indoor play and larger, bouncy ones for outside play. If your young child begins to throw things, such as food off the high chair or toys and crayons, show her where it’s OK to throw things and only with a ball and not food or toys. Set up a target for your older child on the wall or in baskets for ball throwing indoors.

6. Music: Music is an activity enjoyed by children of all ages. Turn on some music, dance with your baby. Do movement activities with older children.

7. Music-making toys: Your child can have fun making simple musical instruments, then playing with them. To make a shaker, put beans inside a closed container that is tightly taped or glued. Stretch rubber bands across a box to make a guitar. Small sticks or wooden spoons can be rhythm instruments. Strike up the band and have some musical fun!

8. Junk: Recycling is a great source for playthings. Be sure to choose things that are safe for infants to put in their mouths. Make sure materials are clean and remove any small or sharp pieces. Toddlers love to fill and dump, so save empty food containers and boxes. Older toddlers and preschool-age children can use their imagination to create toys from recycled materials.

9. Natural materials: Things found outdoors in nature make great toys. Have your child collect things such as wood, stones, leaves, and plants. Just make sure that children under age three are only given things that are safe to put in their mouths.

10. You: Some of the best play can happen with no toys at all. Share a joke, a tickle, or a cuddle with your child. Tell a story or sing a song together. This kind of play can be fun for the whole family!

Family Time/Work Time: December 2004

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Supported by funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Pathways Program, Developed by the Better Kid Care Program, 253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA; Phone: 1-800-452-9108. Website: www.betterkidcare.psu.edu.

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Resources: John Byrnes, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Philadelphia County, *Toddler Topics 4*, 2003; US Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C.

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