

Types of Play	Definition	What Children are Learning	How it Affects Development	Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)
<b>Free Play</b>	Play that is self-directed by the child. Voluntary and unstructured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To trust themselves.</li> <li>• How to do things (climb, run, skip, jump, etc.).</li> <li>• How to recover from mistakes or failure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bodies are gaining strength.</li> <li>• Proprioception – the different planes of the body are developing – balance, symmetry, and asymmetry.</li> <li>• Wiring of neurons in the brain to lay the groundwork for higher cognitive functions.</li> </ul>	Educators must allow time for free play each day. Free play must be child-directed, so centers like kitchen, sensory tables, playgrounds, paints, musical instruments, balls, jump rope, etc. should be made available. Allow children to self-select.
<b>Social Play</b>	Play where children of the same or similar age play with one another, and the play is usually pretend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to lead.</li> <li>• How to follow.</li> <li>• How to negotiate.</li> <li>• How to get along with others.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of language.</li> <li>• Understanding that others see the world differently (begin to develop empathy skills.)</li> </ul>	Allow children to lead and follow, provide opportunities for children to play together.
<b>Object Play</b>	Once children are old enough to pick up an object they are using, they are using object play to learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to manipulate their environment.</li> <li>• Physics.</li> <li>• Cause and effect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children begin to understand their environment.</li> <li>• They recognize that some things they do with objects are unexpected and discover how things work.</li> <li>• They also begin to understand that some objects can hurt.</li> </ul>	Provide objects for children to play and practice with and provide some guidance to keep them safe.

<p><b>Pretend Play</b></p>	<p>Also known as fantasy play. This is the play we see when children talk to people that aren't there, make up imaginary friends, and dress up as characters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That it is fun to try new things.</li> <li>• That creativity is fun.</li> <li>• That other children pretend play, too.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretend play is an avenue for children to test boundaries and to be creative with their imaginations.</li> </ul>	<p>As adults we can model all different types of play, including pretend play. Pretend play is imaginative play and it is a catalyst for creativity.</p>
<p><b>Physical Play</b></p>	<p>What most people think of when they think of children and play. Play on playground equipment or often outdoors – sometimes called Gross Motor play. Physical play is necessary for development and ensures children's bodies and brains develop appropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What their bodies can do!</li> <li>• Cause and effect.</li> <li>• How strong their bodies are.</li> <li>• How to get along with others/take turns.</li> <li>• How it feels to move.</li> <li>• How it feels to be tired.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Necessary for healthy development.</li> <li>• Physical play lays the groundwork for learning.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide space and time for large movements: running, skipping, jumping, hopping, climbing on playground equipment, swinging, etc.</p>
<p><b>Media Play</b></p>	<p>Children are using screens more and more. Children are using screens more and more. Remember that media play is typically sedentary to limit screen time.</p>	<p>Children who play games on screens learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to make decisions.</li> <li>• How to win and lose.</li> <li>• How to preserve and stay on task.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have all seen the look on children's faces as they are entranced with the screen. The research consistently says to limit screen time</li> <li>• Children are coming to school unable to grasp and grip pens and pencils, or to manipulate their environment as they are swiping screens instead of playing with manipulatives like Play-Doh, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Media play should not override traditional play. Limit screen time. Our bodies are designed to move.</p>