

## Enjoying Your Child

### Play is important!

In today's busy world it can be hard to find time to play. Play is as important for adults as it is for children. Play increases our creativity and can make us better problem solvers. When we take the time to play with our children, we often feel less stressed and more connected as a family.

Make some time each day to play with your child:

- sit down and play a board game
- sing in the car
- play word games as you walk
- paint or draw together
- play dress up with your child
- run and jump
- read a book out loud

As adults we sometimes think we are too old to play. You may be surprised to find “the kid in you” again and how good this can make you feel.

### Build on your child's strengths.

Follow your child's lead in choosing what to play. Children are natural players and know it is most fun to do “what feels good.” Your child may be a good reader, runner, monopoly player or artist.

- Start with what your child is good at and help her build other strengths as you play. If your child is a good reader but needs help drawing, read a story with her and then draw a picture about the story together.
- Praise her for her efforts. Remember, this is about fun, not being perfect. Perhaps, start by drawing a silly picture so that she knows it is OK to make mistakes.
- If your child is very physical but needs help at math, have him count how many times he can jump—or measure how far he can run.
- The more fun you make learning, the more likely your child is to learn.



Children learn through their play and may want to repeat the same game over and over to get better at a new skill. For example, a child may want to play the same word game over and over to learn the new words,



and to master the rules of the game. Play should be fun, not work. Although play can sometimes make hard activities easier, don't make your play time "school work." If your child is becoming restless, it is probably time to stop playing.

**Encourage your child to play with you, not next to you.**

Although playing video games or watching a movie can be a fun family activity, they do not allow much interaction. These can be fine activities some of the time, but don't make them the usual play for you and your child. Encourage your child to think of activities that will allow you to play together.

**Find time for each child.** Look for small moments that you can use to connect with your child.

- You can make up stories together while doing chores, talk about concerns while on the way to the grocery store or read a book together while waiting for dinner to finish.

Although it is ideal to spend time with each child each week, this does not mean you cannot spend time with your children as a group. Playing a game as a family can increase family closeness and strengthen your relationships with your children—as well as their relationships with each other.

**Take advantage of community resources.**

Many communities have library story time, parks, parades, sports, museums, and other activities which are free to families. At first it may take some time to find these activities, but once you have found them, you may be surprised what your community has to offer.

Places to find out what your community has to offer:

- City hall
- Local newspaper
- Library
- Community center
- Community churches
- Neighbors and friends
- The Internet

**Plan family time.**

Set aside a special time for the family to play together. This can happen once a week, once a month or whenever works for your family.

- Make sure everyone is present. Turn off the phone and the television. It is important for children to have some time with their parents, without interruption. Knowing that the family will have time together can help everyone deal with those times when the family is apart. Even though parents work, children can look forward to when they can spend "special time" with you.



- Include everyone, in some way, in deciding what you will do during your family time. You can do things at home or go somewhere together as a family. Ask for your kids' ideas. They often have ideas about what they would like to do with you. They may want to go to the park as a family or perhaps create a family play. Let them be creative.



## **Some Fun Things You and Your Child Can Make Together**

### ***Play Dough***

Need:

2 cups flour

1 cup salt

1 tsp cream of tartar

1 tsp food coloring

2 cups water

1. Mix all ingredients in a saucepan. Cook over a medium heat, stirring constantly, until the dough leaves sides of pan.
2. Remove dough from pan, and when cool to the touch, knead for a few minutes.
3. Have fun making many different shapes.

### ***Finger Paint***

Need:

1 cup liquid laundry starch or 1 cup flour and cold water

1/2 cup powdered tempura paint or a few drops of food coloring

1. Mix together 1 cup liquid laundry starch and 1/2 cup of powdered paint or a few drops of food coloring.

Or

2. Mix together 1 cup of flour and enough cold water to form a paste. Add powdered paint or a few drops of food coloring.
3. Add a sprinkling of powdered soap flakes (not liquid) to either of these recipes to help paint glide over paper and to make clean-up easier.
4. Paint beautiful, creative pictures with your child.



### ***Happy Meals***

- Happy family meals make kids feel loved and connected.
- When you eat together, make it a point to enjoy each other's company. If people start complaining—or if there is conflict—set a time to talk about what is bothering people after everyone is finished eating.
- Put the accent on the positive. Ask questions and share with others...
  - What was the best part of your day?
  - Did any funny things happen to you today?
  - Did you hear any good jokes?
- Make the most of your everyday chances to have fun with your child.



## Resources for Parents

*The Little Hands Art Book* by Judy Press

*Kids Make Music* by Avery Hart & Paul Mantell

*Kids Create: Arts and Craft Experiences for 3 to 9 year olds* by Laurie Carlson

*Tales Alive: Ten Multicultural Folk Tales and Activities* by Susan Milord

I hope you find this information helpful. Best wishes for a good month ahead!

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# Families Matter!



AN EXTENSION *Just in Time Parenting* NEWSLETTER