

**A STUDY OF THE VALUE OF PLAY  
TO THE PRESCHOOL CHILD**

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At one time play was thought of as being an unimportant feature of childhood. Now it is considered a very important factor in education. This universal feeling for the importance of play in all forms of growth accounts for the fact that play is included in most school curricula.

In the beginning, only aimless activities were classed as play; then make-believe play was added, involving the intellect. Still later, play was given more serious consideration, but always with an educational and growth end in mind rather than the enjoyment of the activity itself. Play does not just provide immediate happiness for the child; it also lays the foundation for happy and effective daily living. Today we find that even adults play for relaxation, and enjoyment of the activity.

Children need to express themselves during play. Their bodies must have activity. Movement is necessary for the growth and development of their bodies. Movement provides for growth first of the large muscles and later on of the small ones. Outdoor exercise is best whenever possible. As children grow and develop their play begins to take on familiar forms. Their earliest movements have a relationship to their total physical, intellectual and emotional growth.

Children's play can be make-believe. This type of play is good from the emotional aspect as it helps to relieve inner frustrations. Children need a well-balanced program with many

opportunities to release their tensions and anxieties.

Play can also be realistic. This form of play involves the intellect. Children tend to be constructive in their play.

Play activities follow a pattern of development. We can say that most children have developed enough to be able to put one object in another by the age of one year. By three years most children are able to ride a tricycle, and by five years most children will try to roller skate.

Play is an activity that comes from within. However it is subject to many outward influences determined by such factors as the child's health and his degree of motor development. The intelligence of the child also must be considered. Sex, tradition, and environmental factors such as seasonal changes, adult supervision, and physical surroundings are considered. Finally the socio-economic status of the family and neighborhood influences the child's activities.

Much that a child learns from preschool play is of the greatest value in later years. Through play, imagination develops and grows. Playing with other children helps to mold the child's moral conduct. He begins to develop relations with other children as well as adults. He learns to express himself through movement. Finally, he is developing coordination and skills through active play periods.

The sources which have been used in this paper to substantiate the value of play to the preschool child demonstrate that play contributes to the social and emotional, mental and physical well-being of the child.