

Play Types linked to the revised EYFS Areas of Learning



This document links the 6 areas of the revised EYFS (2012) to the 16 play types.

The 6 areas of learning: Prime Areas - Communication and Language, Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Physical Development. Specific Areas – Literacy, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design, and Mathematics.

There are 16 different play types. These are: Communication Play, Creative Play, Deep Play, Dramatic Play, Exploratory Play, Fantasy and Imaginary Play, Locomotor Play, Mastery Play, Object Play, Recapitulative Play, Role Play, Rough and Tumble Play, Social Play, Socio-Dramatic Play, and Symbolic Play.

| Prime area of learning | Type of play | Activities can include |
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| Personal, social and emotional development | Rough and tumble Play: Children understand their own personal strengths and weakness: physical contact with other children can create bonds. / Children who use this type of play are far more likely to understand physical boundaries to those who don't. | Imaginary sword fighting, wrestling, contact sports. Tag etc. |
| | Social Play: Understanding of other children's emotions good or bad, children also learn about the consequences of different social interactions. | Telling jokes and/ or stories. Group games and activities. Sharing information (this could be about their home life, how to use a toy or how to play a game) |
| | Communicative play: Interaction between children/adults/animals, this can be by using written, verbal or body language. | Children engaging in conversation facial features like making faces e.g. sticking out your tongue. Singing songs and clapping games, trying out tongue twisters, writing notes / letters to each other, reacting to body language and learning what different non verbal expressions mean. |
| Physical Development | Locomotor Play: This type of play is to do with movement; it can be something as small as swinging on a tree, to playing a football game to running around. A good environment with varied landscapes enhances children's opportunities for play. | Rolling, Jumping, Running, climbing, stretching, walking, crawling, dancing, skipping etc. |
| | Rough and Tumble Play: Children understand their own personal strengths and weaknesses; Physical contact with other children can create bonds. Children who use this type of play are far more likely to understand physical boundaries than those who don't. | Imaginary sword fighting, Wrestling, Contact sports, Tag etc |
| | Dramatic Play: Children accentuate and explore their own characteristics in a very over the top type of play. | Performing such as talent shows and dance routines, exaggerated games involving movements and behaviour. |

| Prime area of learning | Type of play | Activities can include |
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| Physical Development | Object Play: Primarily using a wide variety of objects to create a play experience. Children may perhaps use objects in a purpose they are not designed for providing them with the flexibility to explore different uses (positive and negative) of an object, creating better understanding. | Playing with a ball, using toys in a way that they are not designed for. E.g. using a skipping rope as a snake, playing with stones, sticks, mud etc. Also playing with people, some children can treat people as objects, for example using partners to create an arch when playing oranges and lemons. |
| | Explorative Play: This type of play is from children's natural sense of curiosity of the world around them. Children like to find out how things work and often will test an object/animal/people/environment/themselves etc to its limit. It is about finding boundaries, solving questions and understanding the world around them. | Puzzles, making dens, exploring the environment, creating imaginative games, seeing how high they can jump, using a toy/object in different way e.g. using a rope as a skipping rope then as a scary snake etc. |
| | Recapitulative Play: This type of play is more about a Childs basic and natural instinct. It helps children to practice fundamental skills that are important for living. | Cooking, Building Shelters, chasing, playing with the elements, play fighting etc. |
| | Deep Play: Children engage in play that makes them judge and assess their own risks. This type of play can help children understand their own mortality and help overcome any fears. It can strongly encourage self-confidence whilst ensuring life lessons are learnt. | Fire Play, Climbing Trees, snowball fights, jumping over/in streams, using tools like saws, hammers and nails etc. |

| | Creative Play: Children can produce/change an idea or product in a way that is different and artistic by using their imagination and materials they find around them. | Arts and Crafts, Dens, Games, Woodwork, Using a toy or object in a different way to which it was designed. Engaging in Loose Parts play e.g. using materials that have no specific use. Like cardboard boxes, tyres, sticks, cables reels etc. |
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| Prime area of learning | Type of play | Activities can include |
| Communication and language | Social Play: Understanding of other children's emotions good or bad, children also learn about the consequences of different social interactions. | Telling Jokes and/or Stories, Group Games and activities, Sharing information (this could be about their home life, how to use a toy or how to play a game.) |
| | Socio-Dramatic Play: Children re-enacting situations that may have caused them concern or distress, this could be something as small as having an injection to parents arguing. | Imaginary games, playing with puppets and dolls, dressing up, copying behaviour they may have seen with other children e.g. if a child has seen a scary programme on television, they may try use it to scare other children. |
| | Symbolic Play: This is when something that may seem insignificant to you is important to the child. It can be sentimental object or play that is very personal and means something to that child on a deeper level. | A drawing or picture that may seem to be a scribble, but are important places or people. Objects or toys that become special to the child and have a meaning e.g. this flag represents freedom. |

| | Communicative Play: Interaction between children/adults/animals, this can be by using written, verbal and body language. | Children engaging in conversation, facial features like making faces e.g. sticking out your tongue, Singing songs and clapping games, trying out tongue twisters, writing notes/letters to each other, Reacting to body language and learning what different non-verbal expressions mean. |
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| Specific area of learning | Type of play | Activities can include |
| Literacy | Symbolic Play: This is when something that may seem insignificant to you is important to the child. It can be sentimental object or play that is very personal and means something to that child on a deeper level. | A drawing or picture that may seem to be a scribble, but are important places or people. Objects or toys that become special to the child and have a mean e.g. this flag represents freedom. |
| Mathematics | Mastery Play: This play focuses on what children do and do not have control of and how it makes them feel. E.g., catching crickets, holding back the tide etc. It's to try to master. | Lighting fires, throwing stones in rivers, trying to understand the elements, forces and gravity. |
| | Explorative Play: This type of play is from children's natural sense of curiosity of the world around them. Children like to find out how things work and often will test an object/animal/people/environment/themselves etc to its limit. It is about finding boundaries, solving questions and understanding the world around them. | Puzzles, making dens, exploring the environment, creating imaginative games, seeing how high they can jump, using a toy/object in different way e.g. using a rope as a skipping rope then as a scary snake etc. |

| Specific area of learning | Type of play | Activities can include |
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| Understanding the World | Socio – Dramatic Play: Children re-enacting situations that may have caused them concern or distress, this could be something as small as having an injection to parents arguing. | Imaginary games, playing with puppets and dolls, dressing up, copying behaviour they may have seen with other children e.g. if a child has seen a scary programme on television, they may try use it to scare other children. |
| | Mastery Play: This play focuses on what children do and do not have control of and how it makes them feel. E.g. catching crickets, holding back the tide etc. It's to try to master. | Lighting fires, throwing stones in rivers, trying to understand the Elements, forces and gravity. |
| | Role Play: Acting like others who the child has come into contact with e.g. a doctor or nurse, teacher or parent. The role-playing may not be what a child directly thinks; it may just be something they have witnessed in the real world. | Dressing up, acting with dolls or toys, acting out scenes they may have seen e.g. a midwife giving an ultrasound to a Childs mother. |
| | Explorative Play: This type of play is from children's natural sense of curiosity of the world around them. Children like to find out how things work and often will test an object/animal/people/environment/themselves etc to its imit. It is about finding boundaries, solving questions and understanding the world around them. | Puzzles, making dens, exploring the environment, creating imaginative games, seeing how high they can jump, using a toy/object in different way e.g. using a rope as a skipping rope then as a scary snake etc. |
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| Specific area of Learning | | Type of play | Activities can include |
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| Expressive arts and design | | Creative Play: Children can produce/change an idea or product in a way that is different and artistic by using their imagination and materials they find around them. | Arts and Crafts, Dens, Games, Woodwork, Using a toy or object in a different way to which it was designed. Engaging in Loose Parts play e.g. using materials that have no specific use. Like cardboard boxes, tyres, sticks, cables reels etc. |
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| | | Object Play: Primarily using a wide variety of objects to create a play experience. Children may perhaps use objects in a purpose they are not designed for providing them with the flexibility to explore different uses (positive and negative) of an object, creating better understanding. | Playing with a ball, using toys in a way that they are not designed for. E.g. using a skipping rope as a snake, playing with stones, sticks, mud etc. Also playing with people, some children can treat people as objects, for example using partners to create an arch when playing oranges and lemons. |
| | | Symbolic Play: This is when something that may seem insignificant to you is important to the child. It can be sentimental object or play that is very personal and means something to that child on a deeper level. | A drawing or picture that may seem to be a scribble, but are important places or people. Objects or toys that become special to the child and have a meaning e.g. this flag represents freedom. |
| | | Fantasy and Imaginative Play: Children act out what is in their mind. These can be things children have experienced through the media, or something that they see in real life and imagine what it is like. | Fantasy play – being invisible. Imaginative Play – pretending to be a dog. |

Useful information

For more information on the play types please read:

**Play Types: Speculations and Possibilities (2006) By Bob Hughes
(sourced from Leeds play network).**