

# Let's Play



“Play is about creating a world in which, for that moment, children are in control and can seek out uncertainty in order to triumph over it.”  
-Lester and Russell

Ever notice that more often than not, young children prefer the box that the toy came in over the actual toy? There is one very simple reason: the box offers more play possibilities than the toy. Toys are often designed with one or a few purposes whereas a box can be a house, a car, a mixing bowl, a boat, a store, a rocket... whatever the child can imagine. In play-based learning terms, a box is an excellent “loose part”.

In this spirit of learning through play, a Playspace has been created filled with loose parts. Instead of making their way to the recycling center, these items will be reused by children who are free to play with them as they choose.



Why this focus on play? For decades now, specialists such as educators, psychologists and physicians have studied children's development. Their work has consistently concluded that there is a direct link between play and a child's wellbeing, and that play contributes to brain development, creates flexibility in thought, enhances creativity, and strengthens a child's ability to deal with stress. So central is play to a child's healthy development that the United Nations has declared that play is a fundamental right of the child as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is for these reasons that Ontario has implemented the play-based Full-Day Early Learning–Kindergarten program. This program builds on what is being done with success in other parts of the world.

Play is what children do naturally. It is an evolving set of behaviours, becoming more complex as they grow older - it is how they explore their environment and build knowledge about the world around them. Children's play is often referred to as free, self-directed or spontaneous play and can be defined as what children engage in when they decide what they want to do, how they want to do it, when they do it and with whom they do it. Free play is not adult-led or adult-structured and does not usually involve a final product. Children decide for themselves both the rules and the roles. Most importantly, children choose to play for the sake of playing and are not motivated by anything external. Research around children's development tells us that play stimulates all aspects of a child's development, i. e. the physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects.

Play prepares children for a healthy life of learning.



So enjoy this Adventure PlayDay as we celebrate children's play. A Play Worker is on site to answer questions, offer guidance and support the children as they play. Don't be afraid to join in if the children ask you. Just make sure you don't take over. Have fun!

# EXPLORE

The following is just a sample of some of the numerous benefits of free play:

Free play often gets children moving. Whether they are running around, climbing trees, jumping over each other or rolling down a hill, physical play contributes to the overall fitness and healthy development of the child. Studies also shows that active children tend to be active adults.

During free play, children control their play and in doing so they develop their creativity as well as their risk-assessment and problem solving skills. Control over their play also leads to a sense of accomplishment which increases confidence and the child's ability to cope with various situations.

Group play allows children to develop their social and language skills. They nurture their ability to communicate, share, negotiate and cooperate with others. As they interact with each other, children develop their sense of belonging.

Through play children experience awe for the world around them and joy in the freedom of their play. This leads to strong connections to their world, both natural and built, and the development of a positive sense of self within that world.

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For more information on the Full-Day Early Learning - Kindergarten Program:  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/)

