

Ages and Stages of Play Table

Social Stages of Play	Description
Solitary Play	Children are engaged in this stage of social play when they are playing alone. They are very focused on themselves and the objects with which they are playing. Their play is independent of those around them, and they play with different materials than other children in the immediate play area.
Parallel Play	Parallel play occurs when children are playing side-by-side with similar objects but do not attempt to interact with one other. The children come and go as they please.
Associative Play	Children engaged in associative play are playing similar activities, but each child is still doing his or her "own thing"; in other words, the children don't exchange ideas. Each child plays as she or he wants to, but there is some understanding among the children that they are doing the same thing.
Cooperative Play	In this stage of social play, children who are playing together take turns being the leader and they share roles and exchange rules. For example, they might say, "I'll be the mommy and you be the baby."
Onlooking and Unoccupied Play	Sometimes children stand back and watch something of interest to them. Onlooking play occurs when a child spends time watching other children play. Unoccupied play occurs when a child spends time in a variety of non-play behaviours.

Social Stages of Play	Creative Stages of Play (How Children Use Materials)		
	Basic Exploration	Non-Representative	Representative
	The object is something to be explored	The object is something to be manipulated without understanding its purpose	The object is manipulated with purpose and understanding
Solitary Play	Infants A baby might use a rattle by sucking on it.	Toddlers A toddler might use the rattle to hit another toy.	Toddlers A two- or three-year-old might shake the rattle to the beat of a song he or she is singing. School-age children A six-year-old is playing a word game on the computer by themselves.

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	Basic Exploration	Non-Representative	Representative
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Parallel Play	Toddlers Two toddlers might each (but separately) leave a trail of blocks, as Hansel and Gretel did, so that they can find their way back to the swings.	Toddlers Two toddlers might play beside each other as they organize blocks into rows.	Younger Preschoolers Two young preschoolers sit side-by-side as they each build their own tall towers. School-age children A nine-year-old is flipping through comic books by themselves, as others around them also read.
Group Play (Associative and Cooperative Play)		Preschoolers A small group of four- and five-year-old preschoolers use paintbrushes as drumsticks while they play drums together like members of a band.	Preschoolers Two four- and five-year-old preschoolers use paintbrushes and, together, paint a picture of their houses and families. School-age children Associative: A group of 8-year-olds are making individual collages at an arts and crafts table. Cooperative: A group of 10-year-olds work together to build a fort outside, with each child occupying a specific building role.

These charts have been sourced from Alberta Education courses produced in 2011:
<https://moodlehub.ca/mod/book/view.php?id=2999&chapterid=7181>