
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute English

How important is play?

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This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Pippa

Hello, this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Pippa.

Phil

And I'm Phil. What was your favourite game when you were a child, Pippa?

Pippa

I think my favourite game was skipping with a skipping rope. How about you?

Phil

Well, I could never skip, so I think I just preferred playing football.

Pippa

Ahh! Well, that's a good game to play in the playground.

Phil

Eighty years ago, it was quite common for children in Britain's cities to play in bombsites, the ruins of houses which had been destroyed in World War II. Today the idea is back in fashion, with kids playing not in bombsites but in 'junk playgrounds', also called 'adventure playgrounds'. In contrast to pre-made playgrounds, where swings and slides are fixed in place, adventure playgrounds provide pieces of building materials for kids to build things themselves.

Pippa

Reporter William Kremer went to see one such playground in Wrexham, North Wales, for BBC World Service programme People Fixing the World:

William Kremer

At first glance, the land is little more than a junkyard. There are stacks of used wooden pallets and big reels for holding wires. But if you look a little bit closer, you'll see crooked homemade structures, **hidey-holes** and turrets. Children run

barefoot. They swing on ropes and throw themselves down a makeshift water slide.

Pippa

At first glance, William sees only junk. The phrase **at first glance** means looking at something for the first time, before having a chance to look more carefully.

Phil

Adventure playgrounds are indeed full of junk: pieces of construction material like old tyres, planks of wood and lengths of rope. But look closely and you'll see children using the junk to play, building dens and **hidey-holes**. A **hidey-hole** is a small place for hiding things or, in this case, for children to hide themselves.

Pippa

In this episode, we'll be hearing how adventure playgrounds are giving kids the freedom and space to play. As usual, we'll be learning some useful new words and phrases. And remember – you can find all this episode's vocabulary, along with a transcript, on our website, bbclearningenglish.com.

Phil

But now I have a question for you, Pippa. We know that adventure playgrounds started off after the Second World War, but in which country? Was it:

- a) France,
- b) Germany, or
- c) Denmark?

Pippa

Hmm... I think maybe France. I think French children maybe were very adventurous.

Phil

OK. Well, we'll find out the answer to that question later in the programme. Adventure playgrounds give kids the freedom to choose how they play. According to child development expert Dr Anna Housley Juster, this freedom is vital, as she explains here to BBC World Service's People Fixing the World:

Anna Housley Juster

It's true. We do **tend to** minimise play in certain ways, but actually after the most basic needs are met for children – so, food, shelter, water, safe place to be – play is **by far** the most important factor for healthy child development.

Pippa

Anna thinks play is as important as a child's basic needs, like food and safety, but unfortunately the importance of play **tends to** be minimised. If something **tends to** happen, it happens often and is likely to happen again.

Phil

Anna says that after a child's basic needs are met, play is **by far** the most important factor in a healthy childhood. She uses the phrase **by far** to mean by a great amount. For example, your teacher might say, "You're **by far** the best student in class!"

Pippa

The freedom to take controlled risks in a safe environment is what Anna calls 'self-directed play'. Here, she explains more to Myra Anubi, presenter of BBC programme People Fixing the World:

Myra Anubi

So, what you're saying is letting kids play... free play actually, or play on their own and, kind of, come up with the ideas – that's really crucial for their development.

Anna Housley Juster

It's **one hundred percent** crucial for their development. In... what I meant when I said that it's protective is that kids build resiliency, confidence, **coping strategies**, regulation strategies. So many of the skills that we know lead to healthy human development are developed in play.

Phil

Myra mentions the importance of free play and Anna says it's **one hundred percent** crucial, meaning completely. You can also say, "**One hundred percent**," as an informal response to mean: "Yes, I agree with you completely."

Pippa

Adventure playgrounds have lots of small dangers: hard pieces of wood, sharp metal, nails. According to Anna, taking small risks when playing with these makes kids more resilient and builds **coping strategies** – a term for the psychological ways children develop to manage challenging situations. And Phil, I think it's time for the answer to your quiz question.

Phil

Yes, I asked you in which country adventure playgrounds started. You said France, but I'm afraid the correct answer was Denmark. They were introduced by Danish

architect Carl Theodor Sorensen. OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with the phrase **at first glance** – when you see something quickly, without a chance to consider it more carefully.

Pippa

A **hidey-hole** is a small place for hiding things in, or hiding yourself in.

Phil

If people **tend to** do something, they do it often and will probably continue to do it in the future.

Pippa

The phrase **by far** means by a great amount.

Phil

Saying **one hundred percent** means completely and can be used to emphasise a statement or show that you totally agree with it.

Pippa

And finally, **coping strategies** are psychological ways of managing your emotions in challenging situations. Once again, our six minutes are up, but remember – you can find many more trending topics, plus a quiz and worksheet for this episode, on our website, bbclearningenglish.com. Hope to see you there soon, but for now it's goodbye.

Phil

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY

at first glance

seeing something for the first time, before having a chance to consider it more carefully

hidey-hole

small place for hiding things in, or hiding yourself in

tend to (do something)

do something often and be likely to do it again in the future

by far

by a great amount

one hundred percent

(informal) completely; used to emphasise that you agree completely with a statement

coping strategies

psychological ways of managing the stress of emotionally challenging situations