

Types of Play

Play is child's work. Play helps your child grow physically, mentally and socially. Play allows your children to practice what they are seeing and learning and helps them "work out" their emotions. To be considered play, the activity must be fun, self-chosen, and have the child involved. Play develops in an order or sequence.

Parten's approach:

- **Unoccupied Play**— The child may look at other children play but chooses to sit or stand alone
- **Onlooker Play**—The child really watches and moves toward other children playing. May ask other about the play
- **Solitary Play**—Child plays alone with objects
- **Parallel Play**—a child will play near other children with similar toys—no sharing. Plays beside rather than with the other children
- **Associative Play**—Children do common activities together. They may follow each other around and share toys but they do not have roles or goals
- **Cooperative Play**—Children play together and assign roles (mommy and baby) and have a goal (building a tower). The group may have a leader

Another way to talk about play is Smilansky's approach:

- **Functional Play**—Children do an activity, movement, or sound over and over again for practice. Also called practice play (Do the same puzzle over and over again)
- **Constructive Play**—Play materials are used to create something that remains after the play. (A picture, block tower)
- **Dramatic Play**—Children pretend and act out both real and made-up situations (being a fireman or a scene of dragon and princess). Also called symbolic play
- **Games with Rules**— Children set up rules and then play within the rules. (Hide and Seek)

More ways to talk about play:

- **Rough and Tumble Play**—High energy activity that looks like chasing or fighting; not meant to hurt anyone
- **Object Play**—Children use objects during the play
- **Language Play**—children make sounds during play. The sounds go with the activities. (Airplane noises)

Sources:

Fannin, R. (2002). *Human development across the life span*. [CD-ROM] Denton, TX: Texas Woman's University.

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