



Taunton Deane  
Partnership College

## Play Based Activities for Parents

**We have put these activities together for you to use individually or with group siblings during lockdown. We hope they are useful.**

At its most basic level, play has been defined as 'activity engaged in for enjoyment and recreation, especially by children.' This is especially important in our current climate of uncertainty. Play is, however, so much more:

'Play is a fun, enjoyable activity that elevates our spirits and brightens our outlook on life. It expands self-expression, self-knowledge, self-actualization and self-efficacy. Play relieves feelings of stress and boredom, connects us to people in a positive way, stimulates creative thinking and exploration, regulates our emotions, and boosts our ego.' (Landreth). In addition, play allows us to practice skills and roles needed for survival. Learning and development are best fostered through play (Russ).

Activities that children can engage in at home or school, individually, with siblings or small groups, with an adult, parent or carer, present and alongside can be great at developing children's self-esteem and building and strengthening relationships.

It may be useful to agree some shared rules (not too many) with child(ren) such as:

- How long activity/play session will last (whatever feels like a good fit from 10 to 30 mins) maybe.
- Where and when
- Kind hands
- Quiet voices (where appropriate)
- Phone's off/silent

What happens if a rule is broken (perhaps two reminders then end of activity for today).

What is great about 'play' is that it is not about the 'product' or thing that is made (if something is 'made') but about the 'process' the child has been involved in; their

creativity, imagination, problem solving, resilience, fun, joy or challenge, whilst an adult is 'with' them, that develops the child's self-esteem and relationship with the adult.

### **Tips for the adult:**

**\*Encourage, reflect, empathise and be curious.**

Praise and encouragement are great! Try to be specific, like: 'I love the shade of blue you've chosen' or, 'you concentrated for a long while on your drawing' or empathise with 'That looks really tricky' or 'It's hard working together'. Be curious: 'Would you like to tell me about your puppet.' Try not to ask too many questions but be curious, encouraging and interested.

### **\*Play with or alongside child(ren)**

Children love it when we are 'with' them. If an activity has been chosen that a child can do independently, like painting a picture, you can paint your own too but try not to get too absorbed in yours that you don't 'notice' the child. Or if a topic or theme has been chosen, say, pirates, and the child starts painting something completely different, you can notice and praise...'You have had another idea...that's wonderful! ... let the creativity flow 😊

### **\*Notice but don't assume**

For example, if a wonderfully tall Lego tower has been built, you could 'notice' the colours chosen, or reflect how hard they have been working but don't assume the 'tower' is a tower (it might not be what you think...or it might be, but let the child say). You could suggest: 'Would you like to tell me about your model/picture/playdough shape etc). Also, take time to notice the child's face/body not just what they are doing...'I can see you're smiling and enjoying ....' Or 'I can see you're frowning and maybe trying to work out what to do next...'

### **\*Try not to problem solve**

If you notice a problem, don't intervene too quickly but offer empathy/reflection like "that looks like it's really tricky..." and pause. Maybe the child will solve it... or you then offer ... 'Maybe you're wondering what you could do ...'. If child asks for help, try to encourage them to be specific and reflect (such as maybe ...'You can't get that to stick together?') -We don't want the child(ren) to become too frustrated or exasperated but to develop resilience, alongside having fun ... and, of course, give help when needed.

### **\*Get creative**

Playing 1:1, with small group or siblings

You could think of a theme such as: winter, seasons, time, travel, space, wonders of the world (natural/man made), volcanos, dinosaurs (of course), carnival, circus, animals, people, monsters, places etc.

### **Indoor/outdoor Activities**

**Jar, Nature Walk:** Child and adult take a jar/plastic tub on their walk. Fill your jar with interesting things you discover. Back in the classroom/home discuss your findings and create a picture.

**Mask Making:** provide a range of art and craft materials. Paper plates and empty cereal boxes can make great masks.

**Make a Potion:** dirt, mud, sand, leaves, cornflakes, spaghetti, paint, water, cooking ingredients etc: - ... whatever can be messy-can be fun!

**Stress Balloons:** stretch a balloon by blowing it up and deflating it several times. Insert a small funnel into the balloon and add flour. (use the unsharpened end of a pencil to push the flour through). Once filled, tie the balloon securely. You can use sharpie pens to draw family members, pets, things that you enjoy, feelings emoji's etc!

**Make own Play- Doh:** 1 cup of flour, salt, water, 2 teaspoons cream tartar, 1 tablespoon oil, a few drops of food colouring. *Method:* - Add all of the ingredients into a bowl, mix well before placing into a microwave. Cook until ingredients form a dough - stir between cooking. Alternatively, you can place the bowl over a bowl of boiling water to cook!

### **Touch/Together Activities**

**Cotton Balls or Feather Guess:** First demonstrate by touching the child's hand with a cotton ball and a feather; ask the child to notice the difference between the two sensations. Then ask the child to close their eyes and guess whether you are touching their hand with a feather or cotton ball.

**Back Massage Weather Report:** Everyone in the circle turns to the right and puts his hands on the back of the person in front of them. The leader describes the weather and each person rubs the back of the next person to match the

weather. For example, a warm sunny day could be a large circle, rain could be light finger tapping and lightning could be big zig-zags across the back.

**Back Massage Pizza Making:** Use massage movements with your hands on the child's back - create a pizza with toppings of the child's choosing.

**Counting Fingers and Knuckles:** Count from one to five on one hand and then start with ten on the other hand and count down. Have fun with the child - they have 11 fingers! You can also count all the knuckles on both hands. Children are often surprised to learn they have twenty-eight knuckles.

**Hand Breathing Model:** Hold up one hand with fingers apart. Using your index finger on your other hand, draw individually around your raised hand fingers. When you use upwards motion take a deep breath in, when coming down the inside of the finger slowly breath out. This is a great activity to support self-regulation and feelings of calm.

### Directed Play

**Hide and Find the Objects:** The hider gives the instructions 'hotter, colder, warm etc.

**Lego Tower using Bricks and Dice:** each player has the same amount, design and colour bricks. Each player takes it in turns to roll the dice and add the number bricks shown. Keep going until each player runs out of bricks.

**You Choose:** Give two choices: - stand by the door if you like carrots or by the window if you prefer peas. Stand by the cupboard if you like dogs or by the table if you prefer cats etc.

**Hand Clapping Games:** Make sure you first rehearse the clapping pattern slowly so that you can easily get into a satisfying pattern before you add a rhyme such as 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'.

**Simon Says:** Adult says 'Simon Says' and gives instructions.

**\*Create your own personal family activity ... HAVE FUN!**