

Play

What is play?

Play is occupying oneself in a game or other recreational activity. Play is fun, provides enjoyment, provides learning and much happiness.

Importance of play

I cannot begin to tell you how vital play is to a child. It is essential for their development, socially, physically, emotionally and cognitively. Children learn about their world and their body through play. They use all their senses in their play, especially in the first year.

At the heart of play, is exploration. Children love to explore, whatever age they are. Children experiment with everything, even when we would rather they didn't, but this is all part of their essential learning.

Play promotes

- Independence
- Creativity
- Problem solving
- Curiosity exploration
- Exploration of feelings
- Exploration of values
- Development of social skills
- Vocabulary
- Language
- Physical skills and development
- Builds confidence
- Feelings of happiness

Play creates the foundation for learning.

However, I also believe play is essential for happy and healthy children and provides basic childhood and family fun.

Outdoor play is one of the most important types of play, here are some facts I found at Loveoutdoor.net :

- 42 per cent of kids have never made a daisy chain. ([OnePoll](#) for Playday 2011)
- 32 per cent of kids have never climbed a tree ([OnePoll](#) for Playday 2011)
- A quarter of children today have never rolled down a hill ([OnePoll](#) for Playday 2011)
- 46 per cent of parents say their children are not playing outdoors due to traffic (OnePoll for Playday 2012)
- 44 per cent of parents say they had more free play when they were children than kids do today

(OnePoll for Playday 2012)

- 90% of adults played out regularly in their street as children. 1 in 3 children today don't play out in the street at all. (ICM for Playday 2010)
- The reduction of time children have to play outside, or to attend supervised play projects is a causative factor in the rise of mental ill health in young people. (*Brighter Futures Promoting Children and Young People's Mental Health*, [Mental Health Foundation](#), 1999)
- Children playing outside is one of the best things that a parent can do for their child's health: outdoor play uses more calories than clubs and tuition. (*Making children's lives more active*, [University College London](#), 2004)
- Opportunities for spontaneous play may be the only requirement that young children need to increase their physical activity. (*The obesity epidemic in young children*, [British Medical Journal](#), Vol. 322 pp 313-314)
- Children who play outdoors regularly are less likely to develop short-sightedness ([Genome-wide meta-analyses of multi-ancestry cohorts identify multiple new susceptibility loci for refractive error and myopia](#), [Nature Genetics](#), 2013)
- 63% of parents think that the biggest threat to children playing out is road accidents (ICM for Playday 2010)
- Nearly 1 in 4 children and young people say it's that traffic stops them playing close to home. (ICM for Playday 2007)