



Play Today *campaign*

Play needs time and space

Why?

In our busy world the balance between work and play can often be lost. Play is essential time for children to relax, imagine and explore. Play isn't structured by a schedule and may come and go, or continue over many days or weeks. Time and access to different environments for free play at home, school and in local neighbourhoods are necessary for children's positive health and wellbeing. It also helps them to focus better when they are learning.

BACKYARDS



In 40 years backyards have gone from being at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of a block to less than $\frac{1}{2}$ the block, in many cases this space being dedicated to 'outdoor entertaining', rather than the nostalgic grass, trees, washing line and shed of old

EARLY DEVELOPMENT



Play can enhance early development by anything from 33% to 67% by increasing adjustment, improving language skills and reducing social and emotional problems. This has positive implications for both educational development and everyday intellectual life

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Challenges we face

- Values around the importance of formal learning over free play have changed. Play is often not taken seriously!
- Demands on children's time from school, after-school activities, means decreased time for free play
- Adult carers are often limited by their own busy schedules and this in turn restricts opportunities for children to play or visit the park or playground
- The trend for residential homes is a bigger floor plan and less garden area, traditionally the place for children to play
- Technology has extended children's time in the classroom and away from outdoor play
- Time for play is much more structured or programmed than it has ever been before meaning that children have less time to play independent of adults



What You Can Do

- Try and make regular non-scheduled time for children in your care to play
- Encourage children to spend some time playing independently of you (even though you're supervising from a distance), either by themselves or with other siblings or friends
- Visit different environments for play

Definition of Free Play

Free play is children's behavior, which is freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated. Free play is by definition child-led and is often the vehicle by which informal learning happens.

Definition of Formal Learning

Formal learning is education normally delivered by trained teachers in a systematic, intentional way within an educational setting.



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