

# The 15 Best Activities for Children to Help Them Learn Through Play



- Play is one of the most important ways in which children learn.
- Play is particularly important for the younger child.

### 1. Sand

Sand play is a fantastic opportunity for the foundations of scientific learning, and developing self-confidence and physical development. Scooping, digging, pouring and sifting, teach children how things work, whilst also building their muscles and coordination. Done alongside a little pal, and it becomes about teamwork, sharing, and social skills.



### 2. Water Play

Similar to sand play, water play enables children to experiment in a safe environment with basic concepts such as volume. Additionally, water play is great for learning consequences of actions. Add in some hand-eye coordination and physical strength, and water play is a firm favourite.



### 3. Play Dough

Play dough has immense potential for learning. Not only does it strengthen fingers in preparation for a lifetime of writing, it teaches fine motor skills, creativity, and hand-eye coordination. Add some beads to the dough for a fine-motor exercise, or get the kids threading beads on to lengths of dried spaghetti held in the dough, for extra play-value.



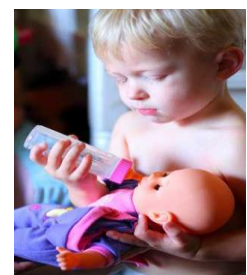
### 4. Dress-Up and Role Play

Let the children loose with a bunch of dressing-up clothes and props such as toy doctor's kits, and let their imaginations run wild. Soon you'll discover the budding doctor, vet, nurse, astronaut, chef or thespian. Dressing-up helps children to begin to make sense of the adult world, roles, and interests, as well as boosting social interaction. Not least, dressing-up helps to reinforce the self-care aspects of self-dressing which is essential for primary school life.



### 5. Doll and Character Play

And we're not just talking about the girls! Providing characters in the form of mini-figures and dolls allows children to develop their social play. It encourages imagination and the expression (and labelling) of feelings.



## 6. Drawing and Painting

Letting children run wild with paints and drawing tools allows them to experience their world in a sensory way and develop self-expression, whilst also developing pre-writing skills. Furthermore, it's an invitation to learn about colours, mixing, and good-old tidying up!



## 7. Blocks, Jigsaws, and Shape Sorters

Playing with blocks, jigsaws, and shape sorters all lay the foundations of spatial thinking, logical reasoning, ordering, and recognising various shapes, sizes, and colours.



## 8. Music, Dancing, and Singing

Singing and music hugely help to develop language and form the basis of literacy skills, as well as basic mathematical concepts such as counting. Furthermore, they begin to develop rhythm, whilst also refining their listening skills. Dancing helps the child develop strength and coordination, and flexibility.



## 9. Imaginative Play

All play should be imaginative, but we're referring to the type of play that comes naturally to many children. Leave a small child with nothing but a random selection of objects and you'll soon find them lost in a world of make-believe. Giving a child time and space for imaginative play is essential. It develops their imagination, which is important for literacy skills and intellectual reasoning. Additionally, it increases their sense of self, and self-esteem, as well as making sense of the world around them, as well as ability to handle boredom.



## 10. Running, Jumping, Climbing, Swinging

Young children have a compulsion to move. Allowing them to do so, and providing safe and age-appropriate challenges, allows them to increase their confidence as well as develop their resilience through risk-taking. Of course, gross motor skills also receive a mighty boost.





### 11. Nature Play

Children's learning is fuelled with rocket-fuel when you take the play space out in to the great outdoors. That's why Forest Schools are so popular and highly regarded. Not only is it healthy, it teaches a respect for the environment, and the beginnings of biology. It also helps children to become more independent and inquisitive.



### 12. Sensory Play

In a nutshell, sensory play is any play activity which involves touch, smell, taste, sight and hearing. This can be provided with a plate of jelly, aqua beads, ice, rainbow rice, or even small world tubs. Sensory play stimulates exploration and the building blocks of science and investigation.



### 13. Basic Board Games

There are so many board games available for even the youngest players, and these should be embraced – not only for their fun factor, but for their learning potential. In addition to the themes of numbers, colours, shapes, and early phonics, these games are vital for teaching children turn-taking and sharing.



### 14. Cooking and Pretend-Cooking

Cooking, and pretend cooking, serving, and shops, are great play scenarios for kids. Cooking itself combines elements of sensory play, mathematical concepts, home safety, and following processes. Pretend cooking, serving, and toy shops also teach basic mathematical ideas as well as social interaction, and how to be thoughtful to others.



### 15. The Cardboard Box

Yes really! The humble cardboard box is one of the most incredible invitations to play. Will it be a house, a car, a home for their cuddlies? Provide them with scraps of fabric, cushions, pencils and paper plates and watch them explore their world, enter their imagination, and begin thinking like an engineer.

