

Play

Guidance for Parents and Carers

*Gateshead Psychological
Service*
Wellbeing for Education
Return Project



Why is play so important?

Playtime is when children are having **fun**, being **creative** and are fully **engaged** in what they are doing. Play matters because it helps children to **learn, develop skills** and find their **interests**. By playing with your child, you are giving them the foundations to help them navigate the world around them.

Playing with your child is one of the best things you can do to help their minds grow!

Play and Wellbeing

As well as supporting children's learning and development, **play also helps children to manage their emotions** and make sense of their situation. During times of uncertainty it:

- helps give a feeling of normality
- helps children to overcome emotional pain
- helps children to make meaning of what has happened to them
- allows them to explore their creativity

[Here is a short video on the psychology of play](#)

What is the best way to play with my child?

Depending on the age or stage of development of your child, there are many different ways you can engage in play with them. **You don't need any fancy toys or equipment**, sometimes the best kind of play is using the resources you already have creatively (teaching your child to improvise and use their imagination too).

We have broken down some top tips into the age ranges for you on the next page.

Age/Stages of Development

Early Years 0-4

Play can begin as soon as your child is born and this play changes and develops as your child ages. Here are some top tips:

- ✓ Follow your child's interests
- ✓ Let your child direct their play
- ✓ Play with your child in different ways
- ✓ Ask your child questions
- ✓ Talk to your child throughout the play
- ✓ Encourage playing with others (if possible)
- ✓ Make time to play in the family routine
- ✓ Be silly!
- ✓ Get outside



Children 5-11

During these ages, children explore their **social skills**, **creativity** and **self-expression**. Children will engage in more complex, organised play. Here are some top tips:

- ✓ Help your child to problem solve through their play
- ✓ Bring in learning – practice maths and literacy skills through role play (e.g. shopkeeper play)
- ✓ It's a good time to teach your children life skills, such as cooking, through play.
- ✓ Let them explore a project about something they are interested in.
- ✓ Encourage your child to ask questions and be curious about the world they live in.



Teens 12+

At this age, many young people are engaging with digital forms of play. This could be via **computer games or social media**. They can use and practise their communication skills with their friends during this kind of play. You can play with your children digitally too. For example, you could play a video game together and support them with puzzles or tricky boss levels. It is really important to **supervise their digital play and make sure that they are safe**. Here are some guides: [\[Parent guide to gaming\]](#) [\[Parent guide to social media\]](#)

Just because your child is now a teenager doesn't mean that they won't want to play with you. Play some board games or card games with them, the old-fashioned way. Here is a great resource about play for older children and teens: [Older children play too by Play Wales](#)



Play Guides, Links and Resources

- [The Importance of Independent Play | Pathways.org](#)
- [Water Play Benefits | Water Safety Tips | Pathways.org](#)
- [Choose the Perfect Game for Family Night | Fun Activities](#)
- [How to Get Siblings Playing Together at Home | Pathways.org](#)
- [Keeping Kids Entertained During Lockdown | Save the Children UK](#)
- [A comprehensive guide for supporting play with your children ages 0-18](#)
- [Fun Activities For Playtime! | Free Resources for Parents](#)
- [Top tips - screen time by Play Wales](#)
- [Top tips - make time for play by Play Wales](#)
- [Playing actively in and around the home by Play Wales](#)

