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MAKE TIME TO PLAY

The Benefits of Play

Through play, children learn to interact with others, develop language skills, recognize and solve problems, and discover their creative potential. Play helps children make sense of, and find their place in the world.

* **Physical development** - The rough and tumble of active play helps children to develop physically and keeps them fit.

* **Academics** - There is a close link between play and learning. Play is critical for brain development, imagination and creative problem-solving skills. It lays the foundation for success in reading and writing.

* **Social and emotional learning** - Research suggests that make-believe play among children increases cooperation, empathy, and impulse control, and reduces aggression, resulting in better overall emotional and social health.

* **Sheer joy** - The evidence is clear- healthy children of all ages love to play. Experts in child development say that plenty of time for childhood play is one of the key factors leading to happiness in childhood and in later life.

Adapted from the Alliance for Childhood newsletter

FUN WITH WATER & SAND

For preschoolers:

Fill a play pool or large tub with a few inches of water, add containers and

- small balls and tongs to pick up and put the balls in the containers.
- funnels, measuring cups, eye droppers and anything else a child could use to fill the containers.
- boats made with Styrofoam pieces, toothpicks for mast and paper for sails.

Add leaves, flowers or small toys when making ice cubes in trays or small containers. The next day take them out of the freezer and have children observe as they melt.

Popsicle holders can be filled with water and frozen. Children can use frozen popsicles to "paint" outside on fences, sidewalks or paper.

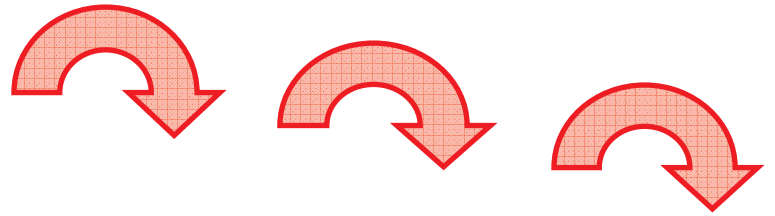
Mark an area at the beach or use the sandbox at home. Hide items with different textures like blocks, cardboard tubes, small toys or Styrofoam "peanuts" for the children to find. Have them describe the item as they discover it.

For toddlers:

Outside or on a plastic mat, put some ice cubes in a tub or large bowl and give the toddler a big spoon to play with the cubes.

Communities for Kids is a coalition of three early childhood development initiatives. We promote optimal health and development of all children, from conception to age 6, in the South Okanagan-Similkameen. Our coalition includes *Communities for Kids*, *Success By 6®* and *Understanding the Early Years*.

Parks & playgrounds for each community can be found at:



Don't forget these great oldies for outdoor, family play:

- ▶ Hide & Seek
- ▶ Mother May I
- ▶ Tag
- ▶ Simon Says
- ▶ Follow the Leader
- ▶ Limbo
- ▶ Kick the Can
- ▶ Freeze Tag
- ▶ Hopscotch
- ▶ Duck, duck, goose
- ▶ Hot Potato
- ▶ Leapfrog
- ▶ Jacks
- ▶ Pig in the Middle

Or create a

- ▶ Scavenger or treasure hunt
- ▶ Obstacle course using your sprinklers or wading pools
- ▶ Overnight backyard campout

For details on these games,

1. Go to www.communitiesforkids.ca
2. Hover over the Families button on the menu
3. Click on Fun Stuff
4. Click on Games
5. Click on the Games List link to access the document

www.communitiesforkids.ca

1. Go to the Communities column at the top of the page and select Community Resources Directory from the drop-down list.
2. Under the Category Lookup – Community option, click on your community from the drop-down list.
3. Under 1. Select a Category, click on the down arrow and select Sports and Leisure.
4. Under 2. Select a Sub-Category, click on the down arrow and select Physical Structures.
5. Scroll down to view a list of parks, playgrounds, walking trails and more - all in your community. Or for a fun family trip, take a day and visit the parks in another community in our area.

Advocate for Play

- Talk about the importance of imaginative play for children.
- Work in your community to create safe, age-appropriate playgrounds.
- Plan a block party play day with your neighbours.

For more great information, check out our web site at

www.communitiesforkids.ca

The Understanding the Early Years initiative is funded by Human Resources and Social Development Canada. For further information, visit www.hrsdc.gc.ca.

Send comments, suggestions, ideas and questions to communitiesforkids@telus.net or call 250-496-5511.
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