

GET YOUR PLAY ON!



Play is an essential part of every childhood. It's the way children explore, create and discover. Through play children learn about themselves and the world around them.

WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?

Active play is any kind of play that involves moving about. This begins with simple movements like a baby lifting its head or reaching for a toy. It develops into more physically active play during the preschool years. For example a game of chasey, or a family bike ride.

ACTIVE PLAY

- Improves muscle control, coordination, strength and endurance.
- Helps children build social skills and learn about teamwork and cooperation.
- Helps foster self-esteem in children.

ACTIVE PLAY AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Active play allows children to discover what their bodies can do. Children enhance their physical development through moving their bodies in different ways. Active play helps children develop balance, coordination, flexibility and strength. Active play allows children to develop habits and interests that can form the basis of an active and healthy lifestyle.

ACTIVE PLAY AND HEALTHY WEIGHT

- One in four children in Australia are above their healthy weight.
- For children aged 1 to 5, experts recommend a total of 180 minutes of active play spread across the day.
- For children aged 5 to 12 years, experts recommend at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity each day.

ACTIVE PLAY AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Play, including active play supports brain development. This helps with learning and memory. Active play has also been shown to enhance curiosity and improve creativity.

But nowadays children are playing outdoors less than they used to. Fewer children are walking or riding bikes to school. Researchers have started to look at how to add play back into the day. Recent studies have found that providing children with active breaks during the day maximises their attention in class and improves learning.



ACTIVE PLAY & HEALTH



THE VALUE OF play



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ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY

Rough and tumble play usually involves playing with others. Fathers are more likely than mothers to initiate rough and tumble play with their children. Rough and tumble play also tends to take place in the playground, or on the sports field.

Rough and tumble play is different to fighting. An important distinction is that rough and tumble play should be fun for everyone involved. This type of play helps children understand boundaries. It may be important to set rules around what is acceptable, and what is not. Through rough and tumble play children can develop empathy and an understanding not to hurt others.

- Karaoke or dancing to music.
- Balance beam (try a home-made balance line with masking tape along the floor).
- Games such as Twister.
- Simulated sports games connected to the TV.

SUMMARY

- Active play is important for physical health and wellbeing.
- Active play supports brain development and improves academic performance.
- Children need to be physically active every day.

ACTIVE PLAY & HEALTH

ENCOURAGING ACTIVE PLAY

Some children will almost always choose active play. Others will need a little more encouragement. A mix of free play and structured activities can help ensure your child is active every day.

- Parks and play spaces will provide interesting and challenging activities for your child.
- Playgroups offer a chance for children (and their parents) to meet and play with others.
- Swimming lessons are great for coordination and strength. They also help children develop a sense of enjoyment in and around water.

TOYS THAT CAN INSPIRE ACTIVE PLAY

Most commonly, active play occurs outdoors. Here are a few ideas to help inspire active play for your child.

- Balls for throwing or kicking.
- Yoyos, frisbees and hula hoops.
- Bikes and scooters.
- Swings, slides, climbing frames.
- Stilts and pogo sticks.
- Super soakers.
- Garden tools.
- Sports equipment like tennis racquet or cricket bat.
- Trampolines.
- Roller skates or roller blades.

Even on rainy days active play is important. Get your raincoats on, or choose from some of the indoor active play ideas below.

- Push-pull along toys.
- Building blocks and construction toys.
- Ride on vehicles, hobby horse.
- Dance mats.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Also visit www.austoy.com.au

The ATA acknowledges the work of the National Toy Council (UK) in the development of these materials.

The full set of *Value of Play* leaflets are available for download at www.valueofplay.com.au



THE **VALUE** OF **play**



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