



# POWER OF PLAY

**Play is not just about having fun but about taking risks, experimenting, and testing boundaries.**

Play builds the brain and the body. Play has been shown to support brain structure and functioning, facilitating synapse connection and improving brain plasticity.

Play is also critical to safe, stable, and nurturing relationships, supporting developmental milestones, and mental health.

Depending on the culture to which children grow up, they learn different skills through play.

**How does play support child development?**

Children learn by exploring their environments and building context from their experiences. Learning thrives when children are given control of their own actions to play.

Play enables social skills such as listening to directions, paying attention, resolving conflict, and negotiating relationships. Play and stress are closely linked. High amounts of play are associated with low levels of cortisol. Play, when supported by nurturing caregivers, may affect brain functions by buffering adversity and reducing toxic stress.

Play builds motor competence to master fine and gross motor skills, and the confidence to engage in more active play. Motor skill competence lays the foundation for preferences of physical activity. Supporting infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to practice and master their motor skills build their ability.

**Children learn new words by interacting with others, and repeated exposures to words in various settings.**

Play supports language development by asking children to decipher meaning and listen and observe cues from others.

**Play allows children to practice the language skills they have learned and build on their expanding vocabulary.**

Interacting with adults and peers also enables children to refine their speech sounds through listening to others.

Play builds skills such as intrinsic motivation and executive functioning. Executive functioning includes working memory, flexible thinking, and self-regulation. Children use these skills to learn, solve problems, follow directions, and pay attention. Play also supports early math skills such as spatial concepts. Executive functioning skills are foundational for school readiness and academic success.

**Source:** American Academy of Pediatrics **Last Updated:** 12/21/2021 [Power of Play in Early Childhood](#)

## History Of Provider Appreciation Day

Historically, parents were the primary caregivers for their children, passing on knowledge and skills as the child grew and developed. When parents couldn't be present, they typically entrusted the child's care to close relatives, often grandparents.

Provider Appreciation Day was likely established in 1995 by child care volunteers in New Jersey to express gratitude to those working in the child care field. This profession grew in demand near the end of the 20th century as societal shifts and increased work demands led more parents to rely on professional caregivers. Caregivers are skilled child care workers who engage children, keep them safe, and teach them important life skills.

