

Play

by Charlotte Whitehouse and Leanne Davies



unoccupied

At this stage a child is just making a lot of movements with their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc. They are learning about and discovering how their body moves.



solitary

This is the stage when a child plays alone. They are not interested in playing with others quite yet.



onlooker

During this stage a child begins to watch other children playing but does not play with them.



Stages of Play

When a child plays alongside or near others but does not play with them

parallel



associative



cooperative



When a child starts to interact with others during play, but there is not a large amount of interaction at this stage.

When a child plays together with others and has interest in both the activity and other children involved in playing

Why is play significant?



UNCRC Article 31:

I have a right to relax and play



Emotions

Through play, children learn to cope with their **emotions** as they act out fear, frustration, anger and aggression in a situation they control. It's also a chance for them to practice empathy and understanding.



Attachment

Attachment play can help children to develop a secure attachment with an emotionally available adult. It can help the child to feel special, build self-esteem, develop capacity for relationships and develop effective stress regulatory systems.

Attachment play 'How to':

- Play isn't always about being funny or making jokes but instead about supporting a child towards engagement, interaction and building relationships.
- As much as possible, sit opposite the child
- Follow the child's lead and be flexible
- Be sensitive to the child's response
- Do not use the activity to teach and correct
- If the child is laughing or smiling, then you know that you are on the right track!
- Avoid tickling activities – laughing during tickling doesn't always mean that the child is enjoying it!
- Have fun!

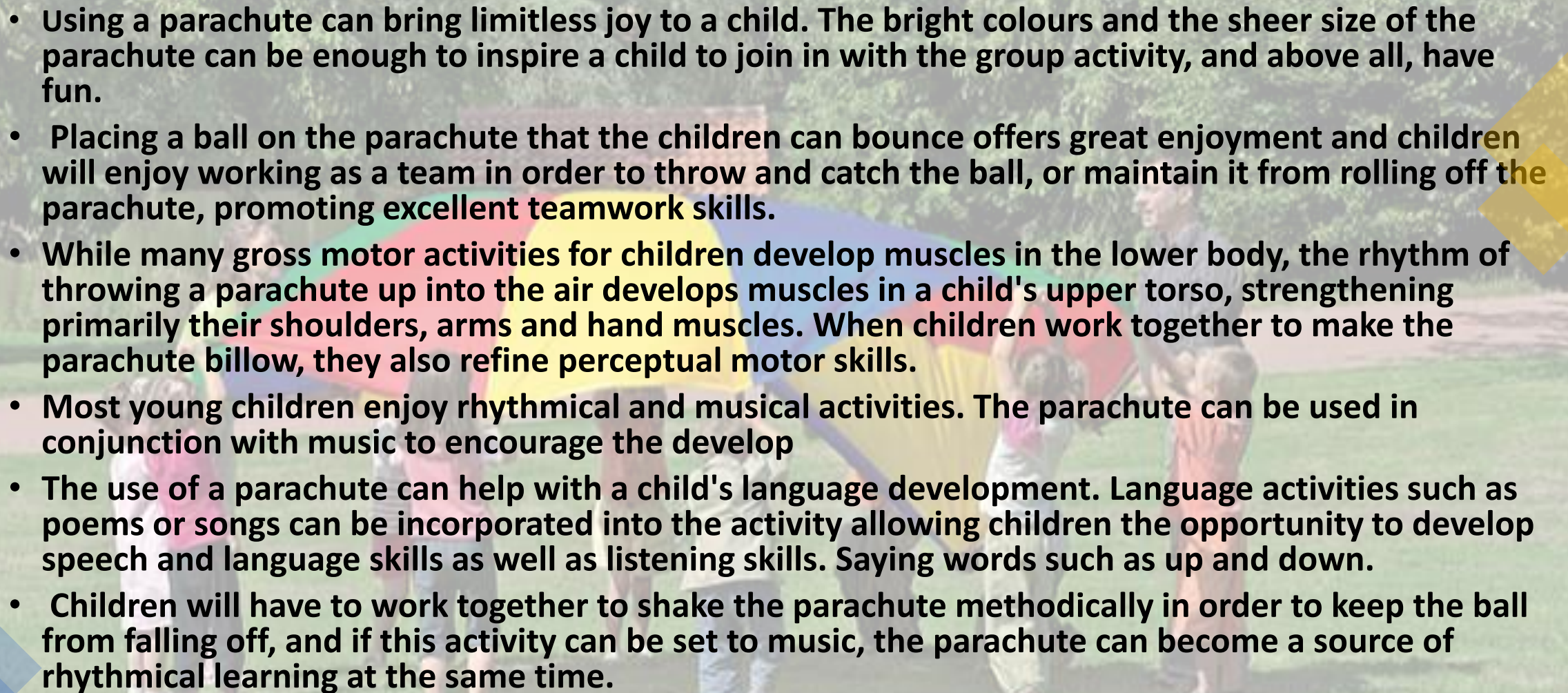
Play puts Children at the centre

- Placing the **child** at the centre of the learning process in which they are active participants is easily achieved with play.
- **Child-centred play** can motivate young learners. Unstructured **play** can be incredibly motivating for **children**. When **children** can follow their own interests relatively unchecked, they can feel more energised and engaged within their environment.

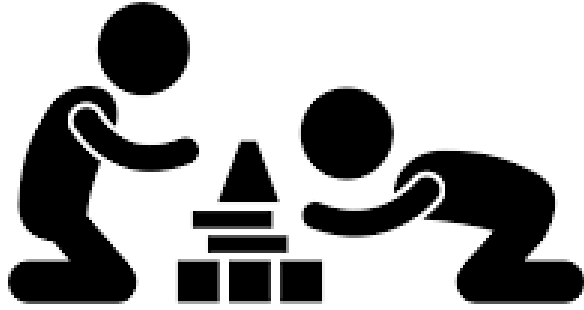


Playing with balls makes physical activity fun. Throwing, rolling, catching and kicking balls is good for muscle development, hand-eye coordination and fitness. This is also a good proprioception activity



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- A group of children are gathered on a grassy field, holding a large, multi-colored parachute. The parachute is partially inflated and held up by the children. The background shows a line of trees under a bright sky. The text is overlaid on the image.
- Using a parachute can bring limitless joy to a child. The bright colours and the sheer size of the parachute can be enough to inspire a child to join in with the group activity, and above all, have fun.
 - Placing a ball on the parachute that the children can bounce offers great enjoyment and children will enjoy working as a team in order to throw and catch the ball, or maintain it from rolling off the parachute, promoting excellent teamwork skills.
 - While many gross motor activities for children develop muscles in the lower body, the rhythm of throwing a parachute up into the air develops muscles in a child's upper torso, strengthening primarily their shoulders, arms and hand muscles. When children work together to make the parachute billow, they also refine perceptual motor skills.
 - Most young children enjoy rhythmical and musical activities. The parachute can be used in conjunction with music to encourage the develop
 - The use of a parachute can help with a child's language development. Language activities such as poems or songs can be incorporated into the activity allowing children the opportunity to develop speech and language skills as well as listening skills. Saying words such as up and down.
 - Children will have to work together to shake the parachute methodically in order to keep the ball from falling off, and if this activity can be set to music, the parachute can become a source of rhythmical learning at the same time.

Communication



- One of the best ways to develop any child's communication and turn taking is through play!

- Sit with your child and either support them to play or play with them using their favourite toys. Encourage them to take turns with you throughout the play (e.g. they may push a car down the ramp, then you push the car down the ramp). Give your child lots of praise when playing and talk to them throughout the activity.

- Create pauses throughout the activity that encourage your child to request 'more' or 'finished'. They may signal this to you verbally, through gestures, switches vocalisations or eye gazes - make sure you respond straight away to this communication.

- Use a toy telephone to help your child "talk" to you or other family members. Use dolls or puppets to "talk" with your child. Sit with your child in front of a mirror and say, "hello!" to each other.





Developing Signing

On the school website, under 'Ty Gwyn Information Area', then 'Makaton', there are videos showing a variety of different signs. You could learn and use these signs when communicating with your child during play and familiar activities to support their understanding and to develop their awareness of signs. If appropriate, you could also teach your child these signs. If teaching these to your child, make sure the signs are being used in a context that is meaningful to the child. For example, you could begin by teaching them the 'more' sign each time they request 'more' of something. Model the sign to them and gently show them using their own hands how to make the sign



Intensive Interaction

This is based on the early interactions between a mother and their infant and is largely based around copying a child's movements or sounds. You can choose whether you would like to copy their movements or vocalisations but make sure that you copy **their** movements/sounds rather than you encouraging them to follow you. This activity should encourage lots of shared eye contact, fun and communicative turn taking. For more information on Intensive Interaction, look on this website: <https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>

Play hide and seek with a **puppet** outside to develop problem solving skills, cognitive awareness and teamwork (for a group search activity).

A supportive **puppet** can model social interactions, like ways to ask to **play** with a toy. Get children to act out their feelings or voice their fears or frustrations to a **puppet**.



For children who are non-verbal or have low motor coordination, switches can be a great way to augment their play.



LEGO play promotes sharing and turn taking, collaborative problem solving, social interaction

Lego therapy-

Young people work together to build LEGO® models and through this can develop social skills such as turn taking, collaboration and social communication.

<https://bricks-for-autism.co.uk/about-lego-therapy/>





Nature Play

Children's learning is fuelled with rocket-fuel when you take the play space out 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.

Children can express emotions using natural materials too.



Sensory Play (Multi-sensory approach)

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, ice, rainbow rice. Sensory play stimulates exploration and the building blocks of science and investigation





Animal and Small World Play

- While playing with animals, children actively engage with speech and use it for role and pretend play with their peers. Children are encouraged to collaborate with each other, leading to further social interactions.
- Children have their own way of playing with figurines. You know that a toy encourages creativity and imagination when you see a child playing with it not the way you would expect.
- When playing, children can show and share their knowledge of animals and their habitats.



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.



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.

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.





Solving Problems Through Play

Sorting toys—putting cars in one basket and balls in another—is just one way that the child is solving problems using thinking skills. You may also see them try one puzzle piece in different spaces or turn it around to see if it fits. Your child will now also be using tools (like a stick) to solve problems (how to reach a toy under the settee).



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.



- **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 friend, and it becomes about teamwork, sharing, and social skills.





Like 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.



Play Dough

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

Another fun but meaningful activity is dough disco-
developing fine motor skills in a creative
way <https://www.spreadthehappiness.co.uk/dough-disco/>

Play in Literacy

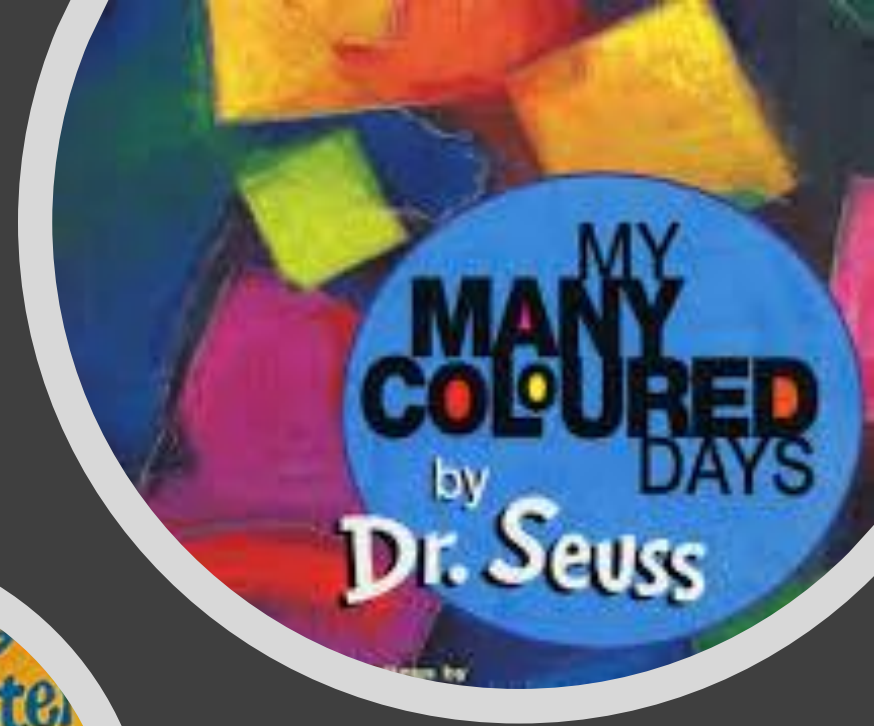
Learn to value **books** and stories. Spark your child's imagination and stimulate curiosity. Help develop your child's brain, ability to focus, concentration, social skills and communication skills. Help your child learn the difference between 'real' and 'make-believe.'

Write Dance is an exciting music and dance approach to develop the skills needed for writing.

<https://writedancetraining.com/>



Use stories to help Children process their emotions, act out and talk about how they feel



Story massage is good for close one to one sessions of trust and it's the creativity of storytelling with the benefit of massage, social interaction, self-awareness and communication



Expressive Arts and Play

Expressing yourself is about finding ways to share feelings, thoughts, or ideas, through creativity. This could be through art, music, writing and poetry, dance and drama, photography and film, and doing activities that make you feel good.

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. This is also a vestibular activity.

The arts have a significant contribution to make to our health and wellbeing. They enrich our everyday lives, connect our communities, help us to describe and make sense of our world.

<http://www.creativethinkingproject.org/creativity-crisis-teaspoon-light/>





Creating **art** expands a **child's** ability to interact with the world around them and provides a new set of skills for self-expression and communication. Not only does **art** help to **develop** the right side of the brain, but it also cultivates **important** skills that benefit a **child's development**.

Drama 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. Dressing-up helps children to begin to make sense of the adult world, roles, and interests, as well as boosting social interaction.
- Role activities in **drama** help develop the empathy skills of the child. **Dramatic** activities help the expression and control of feelings, motivate undiscovered feelings, and sometimes help in discharging negative feelings. Taking part in activities increases the self-confidence of the child.
- Children can also process emotions in a safe space through Role Play.

<https://pretendingtolearn.wordpress.com/downloads/the-giant-who-threw-tantrums/>



Regulation and Play

- Anxiety Relief
 - Regulation of Emotions
 - Sensory Regulation
- Such as -
- Clay throwing
 - Ripping/scrunching paper
 - Fly swatting foam
 - Breaking ice
 - Sock painting
 - Big elastic rope game





Children can learn deep breathing skills by using bubbles. Deep breathing is an excellent vestibular way to manage anxiety and regulate.





Don't forget to enjoy unstructured activities too!

- Unstructured play is important for the development and independence of all children too. It can help build a greater sense of inclusion. If it takes place in an accessible environment and any disabled children have everything, they need then this is highly possible. Games such as hide-and-seek are perfect for this.
- Disabled children have as much of a right to play as others. As an adult you can help break down these barriers and deliver the best environment possible for them to develop and, most importantly, have a fun time.

“PLAY BUILDS THE KIND
OF FREE-AND-EASY, TRY-IT-OUT,
DO-IT-YOURSELF CHARACTER
THAT OUR FUTURE NEEDS.”

James L. Hymes, Jr.

