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**THE CAREGIVER GUIDE**



# Developing Through Play

Children are raised in a world of unknowns. In their early years, play helps them develop skills to prepare for those unknowns in the future. From birth to 3 is the most important time for brain development; through trying, failing and trying again, through building and knocking down and through playful exchanges with caregivers, siblings and playmates, children learn.

**They learn boundaries, self-expression, confidence, resilience and communication skills to name a few.**





It's amazing how many **important and complex skills** are built through play.

**Emotional skills**

During hide and seek, children experience excitement, surprise and learn trust (they don't doubt they'll be found!). In games with mirrors, they learn self-awareness.

**These are emotional skills; which lead to greater happiness, security and ability to cope in difficult situations.**

**Cognitive skills**

Think about puzzles, mazes, memory games and incomplete drawings. Puzzles develop problem-solving skills. Memory games train the memory, and they need to plan and imagine something that isn't there to finish a drawing. Very complex!

**Cognitive skills are how we learn to learn.**

**Creative skills**

When coloring on a blank page, molding with clay, or building with blocks children are exercising their imagination and finding ways to express themselves.

**Having strong creative skills means coming up with new ideas for the challenges they face.**

**Physical skills**

Pretending to be an animal, jumping, clapping, turning, and standing on one leg like a bird are fun and build muscle strength, coordination, and balance.

**Being able to do things creates confidence, joy, and satisfaction.**

**Social skills**

Children learn sharing and cooperating when taking turns. A make-believe tea party builds thoughtfulness and communication as they serve and receive.

**Well-developed social skills allow us to have healthy relationships with family and friends, an important source of happiness.**

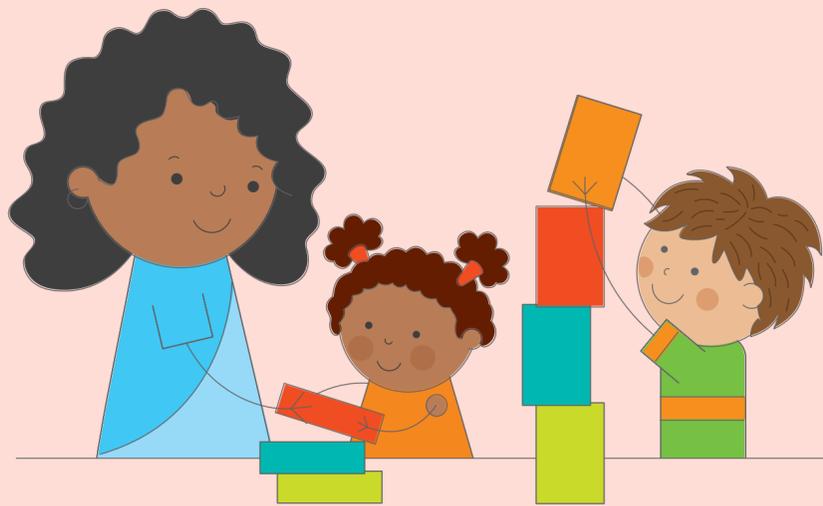




# Embrace Play Anytime & Anywhere.

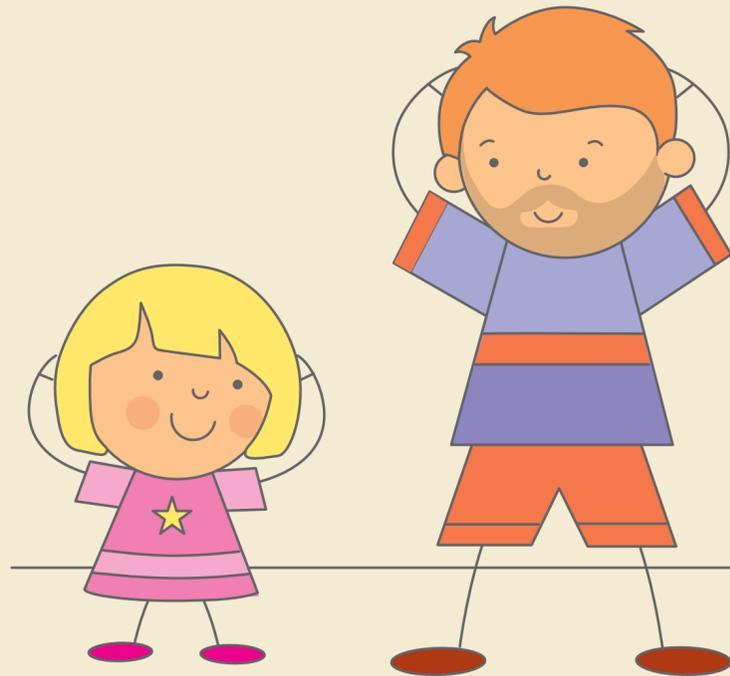
We're all busy, but lucky for you, play is fun, and responsible for a huge part of your child's development. So, take 5-minute play breaks 3 times a day to fit some happiness into your schedule. No need for expensive toys or a lot of space, just make time and have fun.

**Here are some great ways to fit little moments of play into your day...**



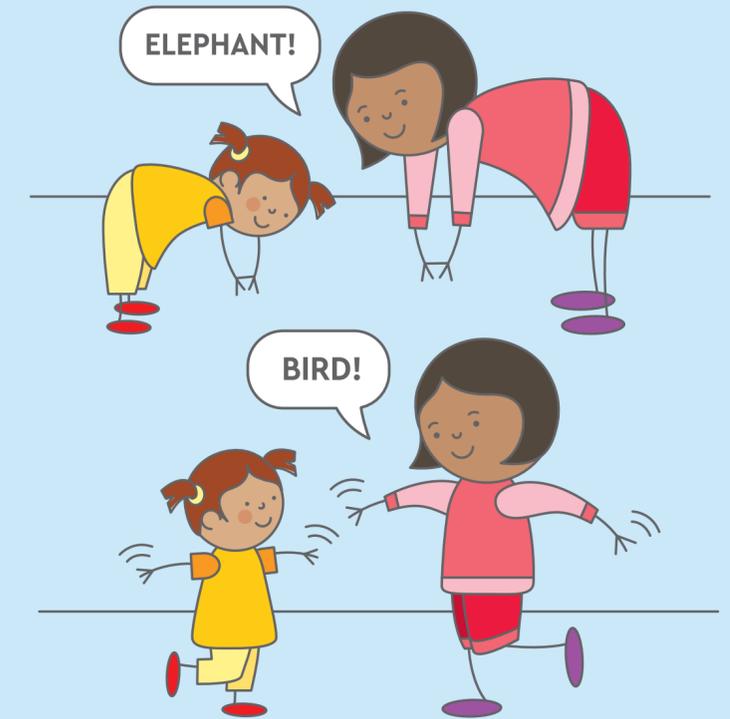
## BUILD IN THE MORNING!

- 1** Make a tower. Use what's close.  
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- 2** Invite them to add to it.  
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- 3** Now knock it over and start again!



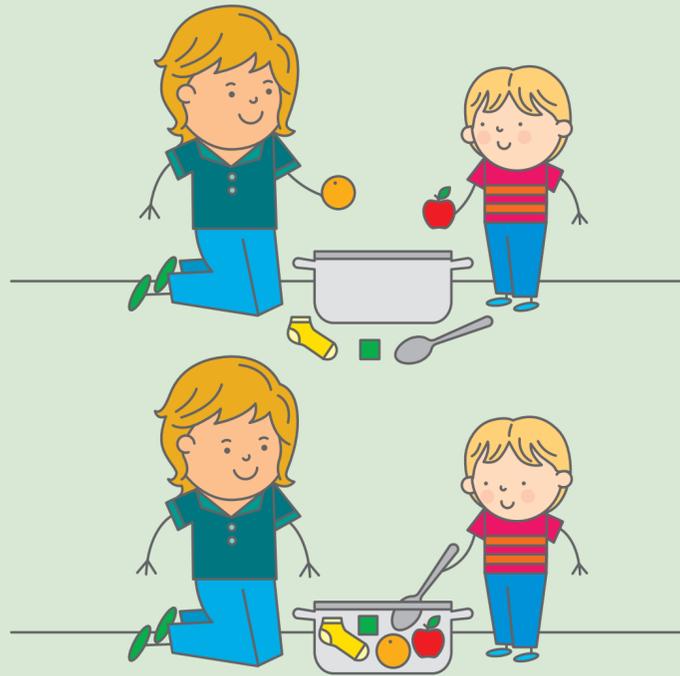
## LET'S MIRROR AT LUNCH!

- 1** Take a big bite, now cover your nose with your spoon.  
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- 2** Tap the table with one finger, then take a small bite.  
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- 3** See what they can do!  
Let them go first and you mirror.



## ANIMAL AROUND ANYTIME!

- 1** Ask them to fly - be a bird!  
.....
- 2** Now walk heavy like an elephant!  
.....
- 3** Ruff-ruff. Have them guess what you are now.



## MAKE SOUP FOR DINNER!

- 1** While you cook, make "soup" with anything!

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- 2** A toy, a sock – you name it!

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- 3** Build memory skills – ask them to put ingredients back afterwards.



## AFTER DINNER BAND!

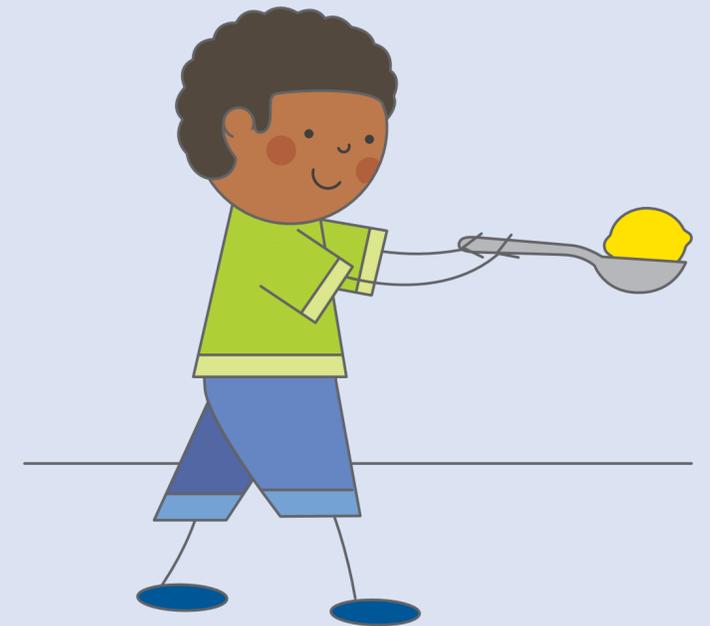
- 1** Fill an empty plastic bottle with some rice. Fill another bottle with some dried beans. Close both tightly.

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- 2** Shake, shake, shake!

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- 3** Hey, we can play drums, too!



1...2...3...

## BALANCE BEFORE BED!

- 1** Give them a serving spoon and a lemon and see how far they can get.

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- 2** Great job! Now try it with different objects.

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- 3** This is best suited for the 24 – 36-month-old.

# More ideas

## **Play hide and seek at breakfast.**

Put a Cheerio or nearby toy under one of two opaque cups. Have them find it. Introduce new objects and more cups as they grow. Now let them try.

## **Seek treasure on your travels.**

What is your toddler pointing at out the window? Name it. What else do you see?

## **Play bedtime games.**

Play hide and seek with their clothes while getting them undressed. Where's the shoe? Where's the t-shirt?



# Keep Play FUN!

Whether it's free play, guided play, or games with a learning goal, follow their lead.

Play along, give encouragement, show interest, and help if you see them getting frustrated, but they get more out of play when they're in control.

**Just remember, there is no right or wrong way to play. If the activity keeps their attention, they're learning! When they lose interest, switch it up!**