



Playing with Water

Water play is fun and gives lots of opportunities for learning. Water play is a versatile activity which can occur indoors or outdoors.

What you will need:

- Clean water
- A tub/basin/sink
- An old towel for the floor
- Some dry clothes
- Household items (jug, spoons, sponges, cups, bottles, tubs)



Water play can be washing toys in a basin of water, setting up a toy car wash or enjoying bath time. Supervision is always needed when a child is playing with or near water.



What is my child learning?

Water play enhances physical development, creates opportunities to support language development and is a fun way to experiment with mathematical and science concepts such as volume and weight.

Empty bottles, cartons and tubs of various sizes offer opportunities for the child to practice filling and pouring. It allows the adult to add mathematical language such as sink/float, empty/full, heavy/light, or more/less.

Water play is a physical experience which encourages eye/hand coordination through squeezing, stirring, squirting and splashing, as well as introducing new words.



Suggestions to extend learning

- **Bubbles.** Add some washing up liquid to water. Explore the bubbles – feel them, look at them or leave some bubbles on a surface for your child to explore in their own time. Talk about what is happening to the bubbles as they touch and move them about. *How do they feel? What happens when they burst? What happens if we add more water?*
- **Practice washing toys** such as a doll, doll's clothes, dishes, cars.
- **Adding items to water.** Washing up liquid, hand soap or food colouring will change the appearance and texture of the water.
- **Explore items that can float or sink** in the water e.g. ice cubes, leaves, bottle tops, sponges, pebbles, bath toys.
- **Opportunities to discuss important topics** with your child e.g. water safety or hand hygiene.
- **Provide lots of items for water play** and ask your child what they would like to add to the water play. Other household items that can be added to water play are:

- Funnels
- Cups/bowls/jugs
- Scoops
- Spoons
- Sponges
- Sieve/colander
- Paint
- Food colouring
- Paintbrushes.



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Music & Movement



Music, dance and movement can have a really positive impact on children's physical and mental wellbeing. Movement can occur indoors or outdoors and adding music allows children to discover and develop ways to be creative and express themselves. Music and movement is a fun, active, engaging multi-sensory activity.

What you will need:

- Your own voices and bodies

Optional additions:

- YouTube, CD player and CDs, radio, or phone to play music on
- Musical instruments
- Household items (tins, saucepans, bottles, spoons)
- Props (ribbons or scarves)

Sing your favourite songs or learn new ones. Action songs - I'm a little teapot, wheels on the bus, the hokey pokey.



What is my child learning?

Music and movement can support your child's physical development, creativity and language development as they develop rhythm and harmony as well as learning sounds and words through song.

Playing or sing songs together is also a great way to support children with transitions during the day. A song can be played or sung when it's time move from one activity to the next.

Running, crawling, hopping, shaking, marching, skipping and/or stretching to the music can be a great release and supports physical development.

Music is a tool that can connect us to each other and enables us express feelings, thoughts and emotions. Listen to the music you enjoy yourself and encourage your child to pick and listen to the music they like.



Suggestions to extend learning:

- Make your own, homemade musical instruments. For example: homemade shakers using rice, pasta, shells or lentils in various containers such as empty spice tins or bottles. Homemade drums can be created with buckets or empty tins and wooden spoons, sticks or metal spoons to create different sounds.
- Tapping, stepping or clapping out the beat of a song can be enjoyable for children and can be a new way to enjoy some of their favourite tunes and learn about sound and timing.
- Animal walks. Model how to hop like a bunny/frog, stomp like an elephant, waddle like a duck. Take turns to move your bodies like different animals and introduce animal sounds.
- Turning down the lights or closing the curtains and using torches, fairy lights or glow sticks to have your own dance party. Encourage your child to play their favourite songs and maybe their favourite dolls or teddies could join in the fun.
- Music can help reduce stress and anxiety levels. Playing some relaxing music can be soothing and help you and your child to unwind. This could be accompanied with some deep breathing.



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Bird Watching Together

A fun and educational way to connect with nature on our doorsteps. A year-round activity for the whole family. It is about being observant in the world around you, it can be simply bird watching or learning with detail.



What you will need:

Optional:

- Notepad
- Pencil/pen
- Binoculars



Look out your window at home or head out into the garden or your local park and see what birds you can spot.

When bird watching consider:

- How many birds you spot within a timeframe (15 minutes or an hour) or during a walk.
- Making a record of the birds you spot. Think about recording the number or the names of the birds.
- Looking at different colours, marks and behaviour of the birds.
- Listening to the birds and see if you can identify certain birds from the sounds of their song. Birds sing throughout the day, but they sing mostly when it is early in the morning and then again just before they settle down for the night.



What is my child learning?

Bird watching can support children's interest in the natural world around them. It can support children to build their powers of observation and attention to detail. Children can begin to learn the names of different birds and even begin to identify some of the more regular visitors to your locality over time.



Suggestions to extend learning:

- Make up a bird detective kit, based on what your child would like to include. You might include homemade binoculars, a note book where they can draw pictures or count the number of birds they see, a pencil and a camera.
- Making bird boxes or feeders. Bird boxes can be created by using recycling items – empty milk carton, tubs or bottles. Bird feeders can be created by using seeds or nuts mixed with lard, margarine, peanut butter or coconut oil. Bird boxes and feeders can be placed outside your home on tree branches or on a balcony. **When using birdseed be aware of the seed content for allergies for example peanuts or wheat.**
- Introduce books or images of birds, their eggs, nests and where they live. Ask the children to match them up. Or use them to identify birds you see.



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Obstacle Course



An obstacle course is a fun and easy way to help children stay active and promote their development of gross motor skills. It can be created both indoors or outdoors, with as little or as many obstacles as you would like.

What you will need:

- Rope or string to hop over and back
- Table with a blanket over it to create a tunnel
- A laundry basket/ box to toss balls or small items into
- A row of chairs to crawl under or over
- A ball to bounce
- Old clothes/shoes to dress-up in and then take them off
- Egg/potato to balance on a spoon and weave your way through obstacles
- Cushions place in a row and jump from one to another
- Yourself - Tumble/somersault in an open area, jumping jack on the spot



What is my child learning?

When you make a physical activity fun, children are more likely to engage fully and participate. Obstacle courses help children stay physical active without them necessarily seeing it as a physical activity.

Obstacle courses support children's strength and balance and motor skills (fine and gross motor) through running, jumping and throwing. As well as supporting physical development obstacle courses can help children with memory and problem solving by taking in and processing sequencing information and actions.

Obstacle courses can be a way to introduce new language and understanding of concepts by including questions such as:

- *Let's make one thing that you can go over and one thing you can go under?*
- *I wonder what would happen if we went backwards?*
- *What if we hopped?*

How do I keep this interesting?

- Ask the children to come up with a list of rules, for example, when they crawl through a tunnel they need to sing their ABCs or when they walk along the cushions they need to clap their hands every time. Adding rules and being open to adjusting and changing them adds a mental challenge to the physical activity.
- Add a timer to the obstacle course, this will increase your child's focus, and they can work to better their time each try.

Set up an obstacle course together using any variety or combination of the obstacle course ideas and use as many or as little as you like. Once assembled either the adult or an older child should demonstrate what to do.

Children can also create the obstacle course by themselves, allow them to use their imagination with objects, toys or household items to create new challenges.

Take into consideration mixed ages and think about an item can be used in an easier way for younger children and in a more challenging way for older children.



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Bowling at Home



A simple physical activity that can be used both indoors and outdoors. Bowling encourages cooperative play, skill development and it's fun.

What you will need:

For the bowling pins:

- Old bottles
- Food cans
- Plastic cups
- Kitchen roll holders



For the bowling ball:

- any type of ball eg: tennis ball, football, basketball
- orange or apple



How to play:

- Set up 10 bowling pins with 4 rows (4 at the back, then a row of 3, row of 2, and row of 1) in a triangle shape
- Stand back at any distance to which your child feels comfortable.
- Roll the ball and try to hit down as many pins as possible.
- Keep score to make it more fun.



What is my child learning?

Playing bowling supports children to develop many gross motor skills such as throwing and rolling, and

further improving their hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness (knowing where your body is compared to other objects).

By counting how many pins are needed to knock down and keeping track of scores – mathematical skills are developed.

Children's social skills are developed through turn taking, waiting, and being patient. Children's self-accomplishment and pride is nurtured through the excitement of knocking down the bowling pins.

You can help extend your child's learning through asking some of the following questions:

"Why do you think the pins fall over when we hit them?"

"If there is 10 pins, and you knock down 5 pins, how many are left standing?"

"How do you feel when you knock the pins down?"

Suggestions to extend learning

- Decorate the pins, either with numbers, or pictures. This is a fun activity to do before you even begin with bowling.
- Place bowling pins in a straight line, and play a game where you only knock down certain numbers.
- Create some rules, agree them and write them up for example, pick a number of rounds, number of tries, highest score at the end of the round wins. Small children will just enjoy knocking down the pins!
- Using empty plastic cups or food cans stacked into a tower. Try to knock them down by throwing the ball rather than rolling along the ground.



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Painting Stones



Painting stones is an activity suitable for all ages and allows children to be as creative as they want.

What you will need:

- Stones (flat and smooth)
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Cup of water

Optional

- Newspaper for the table
- Clear nail varnish
- Felt tip pens/markers



Wash and dry the stone, then paint it white all over. Allow to dry.

Then paint the stone in your chosen colour or design. Allow to dry completely before applying a second coat and/or varnish.

What is my child learning?

Painting is a relaxing sensory learning experience for children. It can be a great way for children to express themselves creatively and imaginatively.

Mark making with a paintbrush on a defined space gives children the opportunity to develop their fine motor skills, control skills and practice hand eye co-ordination.

Use open-ended questions to help stimulate and develop conversations. Examples might include: "I wonder what you could paint on the stone", "What colours did you use to paint your stone", or "What do you think will happen if we mix these two colours"

Suggestions to extend learning

1. Create a fairy garden using the painted stones. Put into a flowerpot or in a cleared area add soil, twigs, stones and flowers.
2. Create a story stone set – paint a stone to represent a key figure in your child's favourite book. For example The Gruffalo would have a mouse, a fox, an owl, a snake, a gruffalo, a nut and the woods.
3. Paint simple faces to help children discuss how they are feeling – happy, sad, angry, excited, sick or surprised.
4. Paint patterns, numbers, letters or shapes onto stones.



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Movement Breaks

Movement breaks are brief intervals of physical movement incorporated into a child's daily routine. Movement breaks are great fun and encourage children to move their bodies, raise energy levels, can break up the day and support children with regulation of their emotions and improve wellbeing. Movement breaks can be played indoors and outdoors, and adults can get involved too. They are a great way of lowering the intensity when spending time online and can shift the mood when everyone is feeling grumpy.

Some movement breaks that you can play with your child:

Moves could include star jumps, toe touches, jogging, wall push or standing on one leg. Use them at different intervals during the day.

Stick on some music and dance.

Play 'Simon Says', where one person takes on the role of Simon and provides instructions for physical movements. You can take turns with your child to do this. This game requires quick thinking and responses, encouraging listening skills and decision making.

Using your child's favourite song can be a good way to encourage them to move and dance. Some examples of movement songs are 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes', 'The wheels on the bus', 'The Hokey Pokey' or 'I'm a little teapot'.

You could try out some animal movements such as:

- Kanagroo jumps – hop back and forth like a Kanagroo
- Bear walk – hands and feet on the floor, walking with hips high in the air
- Dinosaur stomps – lift your knees high and stomp.

What is my child learning?

Regular physical movement is beneficial to brain activity, relaxation and sleep. It is also good for focus and attention, allowing children to get deeply involved in their play throughout the day. Improved balance and flexibility can be an additional benefit to regular physical movement and games. Gross and fine motor skills are enhanced through physical play.

Suggestions to extend learning

Find a physical activity that your child enjoys doing and repeat it. Repetition is important in early childhood to support children to master skills and embed learning.

Have a dance party at home and introduce games like musical statues to your child.

Use technology - there are some great interactive videos online of children's exercise and yoga sessions.

Make some flashcards for each movement break, add the number of times to do that movement, e.g. 5 Star jumps, 3 frog hops.



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