
Today's Play . . . Tomorrow's Success!

Today's play in early childhood is the best foundation for success in school. Play develops many skills that are necessary for children to learn to read and write and for success in math and science. Play also develops behaviors that help children learn all school subjects. This chart shows the **skill that children are learning** as they play and the ways that these skills help children develop into better school students. *This does not mean that preschoolers are ready to be taught to read and write.* It means that they are learning many of the things that will **lead to success in elementary school** by spending their time playing today.

Today's play

(examples of play)

When children build with blocks, buildings, houses, cars, etc. . . .

Helps preschool-age children learn

They are learning spatial relationships – learning to judge distance, space and size.

They are improving their visual memory – remembering what they see.

They are learning to achieve a self-selected goal – completing their own projects.

Leads to elementary school success

Understanding spatial relationships helps children to succeed in math and science.

Visual memory is needed for learning to read.

Independent completion of tasks is very important for success in all school subjects.

When children put blocks away onto labeled shelves . . .

They are learning to match, classify and sort by shape and size.

Matching, classifying and sorting are important underlying skills for many types of learning, especially math and science.

When children play with small interlocking blocks . . .

They are improving their small muscle control – picking up and moving objects.

Good small muscle control is needed for learning to write.

When children work a puzzle . . .

They learn to stick to a job and complete it, and feel good about completing it.

Children who are persistent learners do better in all school subjects.

They are learning to make figure-ground discriminations – noticing the difference between the background and the picture.

Children need to make these type of distinctions to learn to recognize letters and to learn to read.

When children string beads . . .

They are improving their eye-hand coordination – their ability to use their eyes and hands together.

Eye-hand coordination is needed for learning to write.

When children mix two colors of paint to make another color

They are developing an understanding of cause and effect.

The foundation for science education is real-life experience with cause and effect.

Today's play

(examples of play)

When children draw a picture of the sun...

Helps preschool-age children learn

They are learning to use pictures or symbols to represent their ideas.

When children pretend to write with markers and crayons...

They are learning directionality – the way that adults write across the page from left to right in English.

When children choose whatever they wish to do with art materials...

They are learning to make choices, to try out ideas, to plan and experiment.

When children play fireperson or other adult roles...

They are developing perspective-taking skills – the ability to think about the way others act, think and feel, and develop empathy and feelings for others.

They are learning to use symbols to represent something else – a block can become a firetruck.

When children play restaurant together or play grocery store together . . .

They are improving their language skills.

They are learning how to work together to overcome problems.

They are developing an understanding of social expectations and the attitudes of others, and they develop the ability to anticipate how to act in real-life situations.

When children play in water . . .

They are learning conservation of volume – that no matter what size or shape the container is, a specific amount of water will not change.

They test, experiment and guess what will happen.

When children play in wet and dry sand . . .

They observe first-hand the changes that water makes to sand, learning that combining things together can create new and different things.

Leads to elementary school success

Understanding that letters and words are symbols, and practice with using symbols is needed for children to learn to read and write.

Understanding the directionality used in English gives children the background they need to make sense of reading and writing.

Children who are independent learners and who can try out their own ideas are better learners in all school subjects.

Children with perspective-taking skills understand that their teacher sees their work differently than they do. This skill is needed for children to make use of the feedback about their work from their teacher.

Learning to use symbols is what learning to read and write is all about.

Language skills underlie all learning in school.

Problem-solving skills help children to learn in every school subject.

Children become better at figuring out what is expected of them, academically and socially.

Conversation of volume is an important science concept.

This is the same process scientists use in research.

Observing changes when things are combined is just like many types of scientific experiments.
