



# Play

## What is it?

“Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do. Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.”  
Mark Twain

Play can only truly be considered play if it is child-chosen & if the child considers the activity as play. When watching a child/ren play, you will notice all or some of the following attributes: spontaneous, pleasurable, flexible, intrinsically motivated, meaningful, active and rule-governed.

Play is a crucial part of a healthy childhood and helps children to learn about themselves and the world. Some of the things children learn while playing include learning to get along with others, sort out conflicts, practice language skills, develop small and large motor skills, develop self-esteem and creativity. Play also gives children ‘down time’ and helps them to reduce anxiety and stress.

## How to develop it

- Allow children time to develop their thoughts and ideas, to finish their play, alone and time with friends
- Repetition of an activity fosters opportunities for further, deeper exploration and innovation. When play is spontaneous and joyful, try not to cut it short so that a schedule is met
- Boring can be a good thing. Do not attempt to keep children busy or fill every moment of their day. Allow children the opportunity to plan, daydream, imagine and do.
- Provide support around social interactions (eg: negotiating tools and materials) to help them make positive choices that keep them safe, keep others safe and protect the environment they are in
- Be comfortable with the unexpected and mess.
- Provide non-judgmental comments about what children are doing, including the process and techniques they use, not just the finished product. This encourages children to have confidence in their abilities and to trust their creativity and imaginations.

### Jump Up for Kids

M 0423 162 478 PO Box 7, Sandgate QLD 4030

E: [admin@jumpupforkids.com.au](mailto:admin@jumpupforkids.com.au) [www.jumpupforkids.com.au](http://www.jumpupforkids.com.au)

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