

Early

Learning & Education
PROGRAMSWhat's
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Play with Me

Psychologist Jean Piaget once said, "Play is the work of childhood." This is certainly true for infants and toddlers. Through play, they learn to connect with others, develop the muscles in their bodies, acquire communication skills, and understand things that are a part of their world. They play with toys, objects from around the house, and with the loving adults who care for them.

Educators can help infants develop the skills and habits they will need to continue learning throughout childhood and school. These developmental milestones include the ability to focus on a task, to learn self-comforting skills, to develop curiosity and demonstrate an interest in

learning, to begin managing their emotions and behavior, and to learn through imitation.

Infants have a short attention span. Frequent interactions with an adult during play can help an infant slowly increase her attention span. The first time an adult reads a book to a baby, she will spend more time trying to look at the adult than at the book. Gradually, her attention will focus on the book. As the adult reads and points to pictures, the infant becomes more engaged and willing to participate in being read to for a longer time. By the time she is a toddler, she will begin to sit and look at several different books on her own.



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IDENTIFYING CONNECTIONS

All areas of learning overlap and support each other. You can see this when you observe an infant play with a small rattle. She shakes it to hear the noise and cries when she drops it. Her ability to control her emotions (stop crying) allows her to focus on how the rattle makes noise (cause and effect). Consider other activities that infants and toddlers enjoy. How do social-emotional development and learning influence each other? How do cognitive development and learning influence each other? How do you talk to parents about these connections?

Source: California Infant/Toddler Curriculum Framework
by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2012).

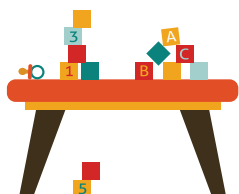




A Place to Grow

Infants begin their lives connected to their mothers. When they begin spending time in a child care setting they build a relationship with a caregiver who makes them feel safe and valued. That caregiver is part of the child's learning environment. On that caregiver's lap, the infant will eat, hear songs, read books, learn to control his emotions, and fall asleep. The infant's environment expands once he begins to roll over, sit up, and move around.

Caregivers can create an environment that inspires an infant's curiosity and offer opportunities to learn and grow. Infants can watch, smell, taste, touch, reach, squeeze, hold, shake, kick, babble, imitate, roll, crawl, and more. The infants' environment should offer opportunities to explore and experiment. Infants enjoy places that feel cozy. Create small learning nooks for infants where they can feel comfortable while they play. You can hang a sheer curtain to create a "Peek-A-Boo Spot," place soft blocks in a corner, set up pillows and books in another corner, and have a larger open area for using push/pull toys or messy projects.



Toddlers enjoy the same areas infants do, but they need added challenges in order to continue growing and developing. Toddlers can walk, jump, climb (small obstacles), fill, dump, stack, carry, draw, separate, match, put things in order, pour, look at books, talk, follow directions, wash their hands, and more. Toddlers benefit from environments that support moving their bodies. Put together a small obstacle course, or add beach balls to your movement area. Provide baskets they can use to fill, dump, and carry objects. Baskets can hold different sized lids, things that make noise, leaves, or different types of paper to tear. Rotate toys often and observe children to monitor what they may need to support their development. Choose materials that are of a safe size, non-toxic, and can be used in more than one way.

"Great Places to Be a Baby: Infants' and Toddlers' Learning Environments," by Jim Greenman (Child Care Information Exchange, May/June 2004).

New Health Recommendations



In October 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released two new health recommendations related to the well-being of infants and toddlers. The first release was about using screens with infants and toddlers. The AAP now states that children under the age of eighteen months would best benefit from no screen time, with the exception of live chats in order to virtually visit grandparents or extended family. For infants and toddlers fifteen months to two years, the AAP recommends minimal screen-time of a quality program with their parent. It is not recommended they use a screen on their own. The adult's interactions bring educational value to the program.

The second release was in regards to safe sleep for infants. The AAP still advises that in order to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), an infant under one year old should always be placed on his back in an empty

crib (no pillow, blankets, bumpers, wedges, or toys) to sleep. A non-smoking environment, breast feeding, and using a pacifier can also reduce risks. The new advice is that for the first six months, infants should sleep in their own crib or bassinet in a parent's room. For many parents, it may be a cultural tradition to sleep with their infant, but sleeping with an infant in the same bed or chair is hazardous to an infant's health.

Talk to the parents in your program and make sure they are aware of these new recommendations. The AAP has a website for parents with health and safety information for the whole family. The website is available in English and Spanish at **www.healthychildren.org**.

www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Press-Room-Archive.aspx



Play with Me

An infant cries to communicate a need. When a loving adult responds in a timely manner, the infant learns to rely on him. As she grows, the baby will learn that she can comfort herself by sucking on her pacifier, or holding a favorite toy. This ability to comfort herself builds her resilience and independence. This is a valuable skill because children that have a strong sense of resilience, or ability to bounce back, are more likely to work through obstacles in their lives.

Young children are curious about their bodies and everything around them. Caregivers can strengthen children's curiosity by supplying them with a variety of materials, textures, and spaces to explore. Children only need a few items at a time. It is a good practice to rotate toys every week. Children also need time outside where they can watch birds, touch plants, and dig in the dirt. As babies grow, caregivers can observe them to see what materials and activities they find interesting. This will help teachers plan new activities around the child's interests.

Infants and toddlers need time and patience from caregivers while they learn to control their emotions and behavior. Teachers can assist them by establishing consistent expectations and responses. Caregivers can support infants and toddlers who are coping with frustration by helping them identify their emotions and supplying them with ideas for how they can resolve the problem in a positive way. Consistency helps children understand what is expected and develop skills for controlling anger or frustration and working through the problem.

Infants watch adults and other children frequently. As they grow, they begin to imitate the actions they see and speak the words they hear most often. By singing songs, reading, and playing with infants and toddlers, educators provide them with information about language, social skills, emotional intelligence, and the opportunity to learn.

California Infant/Toddler Curriculum Framework by the California Department of Education (Sacramento, 2012).



COMMUNICATION COUNTS

Clear communication between you and the families using your program helps build positive relationships and trust. There are a variety of strategies you can use to keep parents informed about your program goals, lesson plans, assessments, conferences, changes to services, and special events. Some communication tools to consider are:

- **Phone calls:** Ask permission to leave detailed messages.
- **Emails:** Ask parents to check their email every day.
- **Text messages:** Ask if you can text information or pictures.
- **Bulletin boards:** Create a notice board for important information.
- **White boards:** Write out the day's menu or share daily activities.
- **Newsletters:** Create monthly newsletters for parents.
- **Journals:** Ask parents to bring in a spiral notebook. Each day write about the child's day and send it home. Parents can read it, write back to you, or ask a question.
- **Website/Blog:** You may choose to create a website or blog for your program. Remember to get parent's written consent to share children's photos or names online.

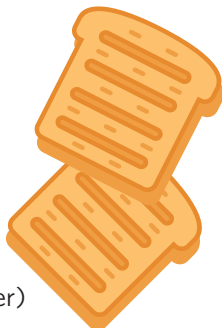
RECIPES

French Toast

Children ages two and older will enjoy helping you make french toast. This is a warm and tasty treat for breakfast or snack. You will need a bowl, mixing spoon, spatula, measuring cups and spoons, a frying pan, and a stove (adult use only). The following recipe serves two people.

Ingredients

- 1 egg
- 1/4 cup of low-fat milk
- Dash of vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon margarine (choose one low in saturated fat)
- 2 pieces of bread (choose a bread high in fiber)



Directions

Help crack the egg into the bowl and beat it well. Allow children to help measure and mix in the milk and vanilla extract. Put the margarine in a frying pan. Heat the pan on the stovetop on medium heat until the margarine starts to bubble. Children can dunk each piece of bread in the egg mixture. Make sure the bread is totally covered. Cook the bread in the frying pan on low heat until the underside is light brown (about 5 minutes). Use a spatula to flip the bread over, and cook again for another 5 minutes. Use the spatula to transfer the french toast to a plate. Children can top their french toast with powdered sugar, cinnamon, maple syrup, jelly, or fruit.

Exploring Winter Weather



Winter brings wonderful learning opportunities for children. They can learn new vocabulary, practice math and science concepts, and express themselves creatively while they explore the properties of rain, wind, fog, and ice.



RAINDROPS SONG

Age group: Infants

What you need: Your voice

What you do: Lay babies on their backs in front of you. As you sing, move your fingers like rain falling down and end by gently touching their tummies. Use your body to act out the other words in the song. Your gestures and facial expressions will keep infants engaged. The song is sung to the tune of "Frère Jacques" and the lyrics are: *Raindrops falling, raindrops falling, from the sky, from the sky, put up an umbrella, put up an umbrella, nice and dry, nice and dry.*

What they learn: Singing this song allows you the opportunity to make individual contact with each infant and thereby strengthen your relationship. Infants are also hearing language and increasing their ability to focus and pay attention.

Source: Adapted from the original by Jean Warren (*Totline Magazine*, April 1993).

ICE SURPRISE

Age group: Toddlers

What you need: Plastic bowls of different sizes, water, small toys or plastic animals, a freezer, plastic tarp (or towels), wooden dowels, tooth brushes, sponges, blocks, playdough tools, and salt.

What you do: The day before this activity, fill the bowls with water, insert the toys, and freeze them overnight. When you are ready to do the activity, spread the plastic tarp out on the floor. Remove the blocks of ice from the bowls and place them on the tarp. Invite the toddlers to explore the ice and ask them open-ended questions about

what they see. Once they have explored the ice blocks, add the wooden dowels, tooth brushes, sponges, blocks, and playdough tools. Do not put the salt out yet. Ask them to try and get the toys out of the ice. After they have tried all the tools you provided, add salt to the tools. They can use spoons to put salt on the ice and discover that the salt melts the ice.

What they learn: Toddlers develop critical thinking skills, science concepts (cause and effect, properties of ice and water), increase language skills, and build their motor development with this activity.

WEATHER STATION

Age group: Preschool

What you need: Dress-up clothes (ties, blazers, dresses), microphones, maps, camera, radio, news "desk", blue butcher paper (for a blue screen), white paper (to make cue cards of what newscasters can say), temperature gauge, clip boards with paper and pencils, books/magazines/newspaper reports about weather, and pictures of different kinds of weather (made or from the Internet).

What you do: Ask children to help you make a weather station. Discuss what a weather station needs. How do you track weather? How do people find out what the weather will be like? Make a list of props with the children. Gather those items that do not need preparation such as maps and dress-up clothes. If you do not have the other props, children can make them as part of the activity. Once the weather station is assembled, children can prepare weather reports and film weather news. If possible, use a real camera or video camera to document children's work. Leave the weather station up for as long as children are interested in it.

Exploring Winter Weather

What they learn: This activity allows children to build language skills, creativity, and critical thinking. It also connects technology, science, math, and geography concepts.

Thursday	DEC 19	Friday	DEC 20	Saturday	DEC 21
73° F	82° F	60° F			



RAINY MATH SONG

Age group: School Age

What you need: Your voice

What you do: Gather children together and invite them to sing a song with you. Explain that the song is a math and memory game just like the song "Bingo", except they will be saying the word "rainy." Sing the song through once, and then sing the song a second time, but replace one of the letters with a hand clap. Continue until the whole word is replaced with five hand claps. The lyrics are sung to the tune of "Bingo" and go like this: *There was a time when we got wet and rainy was the weather. R-A-I-N-Y, R-A-I-N-Y, R-A-I-N-Y, and rainy was the weather!*

What they learn: Children practice sound discrimination, literacy, patterns, memory skills, and coordination.

Source: Adapted from www.kidactivities.net.



ABOUT CHS

For over 125 years, Children's Home Society of California (CHS) has adapted to the changing needs of children and families. Since 1891, CHS has worked diligently to protect our community's children and strengthen their families through diverse programs and services.

At CHS, we view a child not in isolation, but in the context of each family's health, stability, and resources. We believe that families are fundamentally strong and resilient. The mission of CHS is to reach out to children and families at risk with a range of services to ensure every child the opportunity to develop within a safe, healthy, and secure environment.

Therefore, CHS provides a variety of services to children and families in California and nationwide, working to improve their quality of life by offering vital information, education and resource services, and child care assistance.

CHS also serves as an expert resource for childcare providers, other social service agencies, and government agencies at the local, state, and national level. To learn more about CHS and resources available to you, please visit our website at www.chs-ca.org.

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