
The Big Idea: Play helps us learn and creates lasting positive memories during uncertain times.

Learning at Home: Play

🗨 Health Emergencies 🧒 Age 2 to 6 🕒 4-10 Min

Children love to play—anytime, anywhere, and with almost anything. As they do so, they’re exploring the world around them and practicing important skills crucial to brain development. Grown-ups benefit from play, too! Laughter and silliness can help reduce stress and strengthen bonds between us. Disrupted routines and lots of change make play time even more important, for everyone in the family. Playing together keeps everyone’s morale up—creating precious memories in an otherwise stressful time. Explore the playful learning ideas in this bundle.

1 Interactive — Playing Is Learning —



Launch Playing is Learning

(https://interactive-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/SSIC056_Spin_PlayingIsLearning/index_playingislearning.html).

Spending more time inside than normal can have us wondering, “Well, what do we do now?” Fortunately, there are many ways to infuse playful learning into your “for-now” routines. Explore this interactive to spark some ideas. From the five choices on the main screen, select the time or situation that fits the moment. Check out the play suggestion that appears. You can tap “why it matters” to find out its learning benefits. Give it a try...or tap “more games” at left for a new idea.

2 **Storybook**
— Word Play —



Launch Word Play

(https://cdn.sesamedigital.net/sesamestreetincommunities.org/SSIC005_WordPlay/index.html#donotdisplayclose/true).

Reading can be playful, too! Playtime and story time are great opportunities for you to talk with children and build vocabulary. Choose one of the interactive stories. As you share it with kids, point out and talk about the new vocabulary words. After reading, you might act out some of the scenes together, and pretend to be snow monsters or playground detectives. You might:

- Ask what happens next, to help kids think ahead and make predictions.
- Draw pictures of new vocabulary words from the stories, to create a visual word bank.
- Use household objects as props, creating untraditional or magical uses for them.
- Switch roles to help encourage flexible thinking.

3 **Article**
— Dramatic Play —



It's possible to play without any toys at all! Children usually begin dramatic or fantasy play around age two. They may pretend that a block building is their house, or that the kitchen is their restaurant. Dramatic play helps kids exercise their imaginations and work on their creativity. Role play (pretending to be a doctor, teacher, mom, dad, and so on) can also help kids learn about the purpose and jobs of people in their neighborhood and life.

As kids get a little older (ages four to six), they may begin to play pretend with their siblings or peers. Switching roles and coming up with stories together will help build language skills, as well as skills for sharing, taking turns, and cooperating.

Here are a few pretend scenes to play out:

Camping. Make a “tent” using a blanket and chairs, and say, “Let’s pretend to roast marshmallows!” Afterwards, you might pretend you’re getting into sleeping bags in the tent.

Outer Space. Take turns flying a space ship and walking on the moon. Ask kids to look out the window of their spaceship. Say, “What do you see in the sky?”

Restaurant. Work on memory skills as you take each other’s orders, and brainstorm delicious creations to cook. Ask kids, “What ingredients do we need? What tools can we use to cook?” Pretend to use pots, pans, and kitchen tools to create a special meal together.

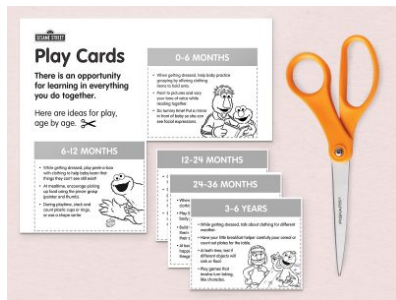
Garden. Talk about the fruits and vegetables you want to plant. Then, pretend to dig up soil, sprinkle seeds, cover them, and water them. How tall do your plants grow?

Bath time. Pretend to wash a doll or stuffed animal. Label the body parts you're washing and then dry off and dress the doll. Ask kids what else they might do to take care of a baby, and act it out!

4

Printable

— Learning Through Play Activity Cards —



Download printable

(https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Learning_PRINT_PlayCards.pdf)

There are lots of simple ways you can make every day routines into play-based learning experiences. Use these cards as seeds of ideas for play.

Don't have a printer? No problem. Grab a sheet of paper and something to write with. Cut the page into smaller squares or strips and jot down playful activities that fit your family. Then, have kids decorate them. Finally, put all the activities in a cup. During the day, draw an activity card and try out the idea.