

Principles of Child Development Associated with Play (Ages 6 mo.-10yrs)

Playing is an important means for children to develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually. Different types of play activities influence this development. An ideal play area blends activities matched to the developmental stages and abilities of a child.

	Development Characteristics	Safety Strategies	Age Appropriate Play Ideas
6 to 23 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has difficulty with balance • Fascinated by movement • Enjoys pretend play • Likes to explore surroundings • Experiments with sense stimulus (touch, smell, taste) • No sense for danger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant supervision • Requires fenced in play area with latched gate • Avoid uneven or slippery surfaces • Keep away from moving machinery • Place chemicals and sharp objects out of reach or locked up • Following play provide good handwashing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandbox • Playhouse • Low climbing objects • Swing set • Water table with cups/funnels • Balls to toss or roll • Small steps to climb and tires/ barrels to crawl through • Bubbles
2 to 5 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energetic • Can jump over objects 5-6 inches high • Balances and hops on one foot • Can solve problems if simple and concrete • Will play alone or with others • Enjoys mimicking adults • Does not understand hazards • Has illogical or imaginative thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant supervision • Requires a physical barrier from work areas • Attracted to adult farm activities and will want to help • Watch for tripping hazards • Teach and require child to wear safety helmets • Teach and provide good handwashing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swing set • Balls to throw, kick and catch • Balance beam or stepping stones • Props for imaginative play • Bubbles • Sand box with tools • Group games: Duck Duck Goose • Playhouse • Water table with cups/funnels • Tire jungle for climbing • Toy tractors
6 to 8 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor hand-eye coordination • Seeks parental approval • Operates with concrete facts • Unable to have abstract thought • Enjoys quiet activities • Curious about how things work • Short attention span, like to remain active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant supervision • Child will attempt adult activities to impress parents • Child is not ready for responsibility • Set boundaries for play area and enforce rules • Require safety helmets when appropriate • Require handwashing after play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kite flying • Bicycles with helmet • Jumping rope • Tree house • Pretend school or farm store • Balance beam • Stepping stones • Swing set • Sandbox • Garden tools • Group games: Hide and Seek • Tire jungle for climbing
9 to 10 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has good coordination skills, but will have awkward moments • Desires peer and social acceptance • Desires to be independent from adults; will attempt to do activities without adults • Successes are important • Improvements in reaction time • Specialized motor skills have developed • Body strength and dexterity increase • Does not fully understand consequences • Risk taker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide intermittent/periodic supervision during play • Set and enforce simple rules on boundaries of play area with consistent consequences • Reward child for good behavior • Assign low risk takers with hand tools • Remove keys from ignition of tractors and other vehicles; keep keys in safe location away from children • Instruct children to stay away from work area • Instruct workers to return child to play area if found in work area • Provide safety helmets • Require handwashing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team and individual sports • Monkey bars and other climbing structures • Tire swing • Sandbox • Chalk board with colored chalk • Tree house • Airplanes • Snow forts • Sprinklers • Bicycle with helmet • Skates and protective gear

Concepts referenced from:

Esser, N., Heiberger, S., Ellis, T., Salzwedel, M., and Lee, B. (Eds.) (2012). Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms. Fourth edition. Marshfield, WI: Marshfield Clinic.

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