

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

Play is an important way for children to develop physically, emotionally, socially and intellectually. Different types of outdoor play activities influence children's development as they grow older. An ideal play area blends activities matched to the developmental stages and abilities of a child, with close attention to protecting the child's safety.

	Developmental Characteristics	Safety Strategies	Age - Appropriate Outdoor Play Ideas
6 to 23 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has difficulty with balance • Fascinated by movement • Likes to explore surroundings • Experiments with sense stimuli (touch, taste) • Poor sense of danger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant supervision • Requires fenced in safe play area with latched gate • Keep away from all machinery • Place chemicals and sharp objects out of reach or locked up • Following play, provide good handwashing and clean clothes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rattles and music-makers • Rolling "push" and "pull" toys • Low climbing objects • Infant/toddler swing • Large balls to toss or roll • Toys with hammers/pounding • Small steps to climb and tires/barrels to crawl through
2 to 5 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energetic • Begin to jump over objects • Balances and hops on one foot • Can solve simple, concrete problems • Will play alone or with others • Enjoys pretend play • Enjoys mimicking adults • Does not recognize all hazards • Has imaginative thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant supervision • Needs a physical barrier from work areas • Place chemicals and sharp objects out of reach or lock them up • Attracted to adult farm activities and will want to help • Teach and require child to wear safety helmets and equipment • Teach and provide good handwashing • Remove keys from ignition of equipment; keep in safe place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swing set • Balls to throw, kick and catch • Balance beam or stepping stones • Props for imaginative play • Bubbles • Sandbox with tools • Group games like Duck, Duck, Goose • Play kitchen • Water table with cups/funnels • Tire jungle for climbing • Toy tractors and trucks
6 to 8 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underdeveloped coordination • Seeks parental approval • Lacks abstract thinking like adults • Developing patience for quiet activities • Curious about how things work • Short attention span, often likes to remain active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide constant supervision • Child may attempt adult activities to impress parents • Child is not ready for significant responsibility • Set boundaries for safe play area and enforce rules • Require safety helmets and equipment when appropriate • Require handwashing after play • Remove keys from ignition of equipment; keep in safe place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colored chalk • Bicycles with helmet • Jump rope • Safeguarded tree house • Pretend school or farm store • Ball games • Stepping stones • Swing set, slides and sandbox • Plastic garden tools • Group games like Hide and Seek • Tire jungle for climbing
9 to 10 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing better coordination, but will have awkward moments • Desires peer and social acceptance • Desires to be independent from adults; will try to do activities without adults • Successes are important • Specialized motor skills are developing • Body strength and dexterity increase • Does not fully understand consequences • May take risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide intermittent supervision for low-risk activities • Set and enforce rules on boundaries of safe play area with consistent consequences • Reward child for good behavior • Remove keys from ignition of equipment; keep keys in safe place • Require children to stay away from work area • Instruct workers to return children to play area if found in work area • Provide safety helmets and equipment • Require handwashing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team and individual sports • Monkey bars and other climbing structures • Tire swing • Tree house • Snow forts • Sprinklers • Bicycle with helmet • Skates and skateboards with protective gear • Arts and crafts • Moviemaking • Ball games

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Concepts referenced from:

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