






30 reasons why FREE PLAY benefits child development


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1 "Free play gives children an outlet to express their emotions and feelings and helps them develop a sense of who they are."
~ KaBOOM!
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2 Active play is critical for a child's physical development. It develops coordination, gross motor skills, and fine motor skills.
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3 Play builds the foundation for a lifetime of learning. Free play makes learning fun, natural, and self-driven.
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4 "We must give children back to children. Children must be allowed to follow their inborn drives to play and explore so that they can grow into intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically strong and resilient adults."
~ Dr. Peter Gray
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5 A 2014 study found that 6-year-old students who engaged in free play developed stronger levels of executive functioning, or the ability to manage oneself to achieve goals.
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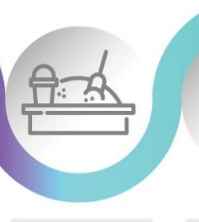
6 "Kids are built to move, and having more time for unstructured, outdoor play is essentially like a reset button."
~ Debbie Rhea, Ed.D.
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7 Head Start found that there was a 42% reduction in child obesity risk and an overall reduction in BMI in school programs with plenty of outdoor play.
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8 "The more risks you allow your child to take, the better they learn to take care of themselves."
~ Roald Dahl
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9 Research shows that the quality of adult interactions in play scenarios is more important than quantity. When adults let children take the lead, play becomes more elaborate, creative, and sustained.
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10 One study showed that free play stimulates the fight-or-flight response without triggering cortisol (the stress hormone), so children can practice handling danger.
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11 Plenty of research shows that time spent in nature helps reduce ADHD symptoms in children as part of their overall treatment plan.
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12 "Having control over the course of one's own learning, as in free play, promotes desire, motivation, and mastery."
~ Dr. Rachel E. White
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13 Play is widespread among animals. Scientists believe that it is crucial for developing survival skills. The larger an animal's brain is compared to their body size, the more they play.
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14 "Children learn through doing — play is how they explore the world, learn to assess risk, try things out, and get to know themselves."
~ Bethel Almeras
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15 Psychologist Edward Fisher concluded from 46 published studies that pretend play "results in improved performances in both cognitive-linguistic and social affective domains."
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16 "Play is our brain's favorite way of learning."
~ Diane Ackerman
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17 "The longer children can enjoy play without the kind of monitoring that leads to self-criticism and self-doubt, the better."
~ Dr. Craig Usher
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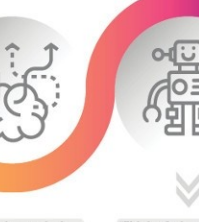
18 Finland is renowned for academic success. Children enjoy around an hour of recess daily, with unstructured breaks between each class period.
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19 "If parents are obsessed with always knowing where their children are and controlling all their movements ... this is no way to educate, strengthen, and prepare their children to face challenges."
~ Pope Francis
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20 "A moving child is a learning child."
~ Gill Connell and Cheryl McCarthy
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21 "You don't remember the times your dad held your hand bars. You remember the day he let go."
~ Lenore Skenazy
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22 "We should be simply providing fields of free action for them to become, through playing, the resilient, adaptive, creative, emotionally intelligent, and socially confident young people that we all, in truth, want them to be."
~ Adrian Voce, OBE
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23 Studies show that a decline in free play correlates with a decline in empathy. Recess and play help kids develop key social skills and connect with the humanity in others.
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24 A 1992 meta-analysis of play studies found that pretend play correlates strongly with divergent thinking, a key component for creativity.
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25 "Think of playtime like an innovation lab where tomorrow's civilization is being actively designed."
~ Jordan Shapiro
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26 Free play changes the neurons in the prefrontal cortex during childhood, prepping the brain to regulate emotions, make plans, and solve problems.
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27 "Play stimulates the parts of the brain involved in both careful, logical reasoning and carefree, unbound exploration."
~ Greg McKeown
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28 "Play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and is itself a major source of development."
~ Lev Vygotsky
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29 Recent research shows that laughter is a powerful way to boost mood and psychological well-being. It stimulates many organs with oxygen and reduces stress hormone levels.
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30 "Play builds the kind of free-and-easy, try-it-out, do-it-yourself character that our future needs."
~ James L. Hymes Jr.