



Play and Learning 7

Active play

Active play is important to help your child grow, develop and stay healthy.

As well as being fun, active play helps children:

- **learn about their bodies** – to develop balance, strength, and coordination.
- **develop socially** when they play with other children.

When it comes to active play:

- **babies** love kicking, rolling, splashing in the bath, and being gently bounced, rocked, and pulled up to sit.

At around 7 to 8 months, babies learn getting onto all fours, crawling, and rocking backwards and forwards.

Then from around 9 to 11 months, babies start pulling to stand and cruising around furniture. Babies usually learn to walk by 15 months.

- **toddlers** love exploring their world – climbing, jumping, and tumbling. Everyday things like steps, doorways, grassy slopes, ride on toys, boxes, and furniture are challenging and fun.
- **young children** move more confidently and enjoy challenges – riding tricycles, bicycles, visiting playgrounds, ball games, trampolines, and swimming. With practise, they develop skills like jumping, climbing, swinging, sliding, balancing, lifting, pulling, pushing, throwing, and catching.

What you can do

- **Screen time** – children learn best in hands-on activities with you. Screen time is not recommended for children under 2 years old. Children aged 2 to 5 years should have 1 hour or less of screen time a day.. Make the most of playtime – turn off all screens including phones, tablets, TVs, and computers.
- Toddlers and young children should be **busy and active for at least 3 hours every day**.
- **Watch your child** – help them move and play at the level that suits their level of development. Let them go at their own pace.
- **Let them use you for support** while learning about movement. Let your child bounce on your lap, or balance on your crossed legs – you will feel how much support they need.
- **Let your child try new things** during active play. Encourage and support them using positive words like 'Hold on tight' or 'Look carefully'.
- **Allow time for repetition** – your child will want to try a new skill over and over again.
- **Try new experiences** – go to a different park or try new play equipment so your child can try out new challenges.



Some activities to try

- **Rough and tumble play** – bouncing, jumping, piggyback and shoulder rides, and pretend wrestling. Explore different surfaces – grass, sand, carpet, indoor and outdoor playgrounds.
- **Movement games** – statues, wheelbarrow races, ‘Simon says’, hide and seek, walking like animals, spinning, obstacle courses or action songs like ‘Ring-a-ring-a-rosie’ or ‘Hokey-pokey’.
- **Ball games** – rolling, bouncing, throwing, batting – use different sizes and weights. For older toddlers, balloons make good balls too! Play catch, skittles, football, soccer, basketball – or just chase bubbles.
- **Cardboard boxes** – let your child stack them, sit inside and be pushed or pulled around, or fill with toys and ‘drive’ around. Take cardboard to a park and slide down a grassy slope.
- **Pedal toys** – sit on toys, tricycles, bicycles, scooters.
- **Playgrounds** – visit your local park for a play on swings, slides, see saws, climbing frames, sand, and water play.
- **Trees** – climb safely or swing off a rope.
- **Rugs, towels, and bed sheets** – slide along the floor while child is sitting on top, or use to make a cubby house.
- **Old cushions** – kneeling, standing, hiding, stack them to climb, or sit and balance on.
- **Sand play** – digging, building, carrying buckets of sand, walking in the sand.
- **Water play** – running through water, swimming, splashing, filling, and emptying buckets.



Keeping your child safe

- Supervise your child closely at all times especially around water, play equipment, or when using objects such as scissors, pencils, glue or paint. Avoid flammable or toxic materials.
- Babies, toddlers and young children can choke on small toys and objects. Regularly check toys to make sure they are safe and in good condition.
 - Toys should be bigger than a 20 cent coin.
 - Strings on toys should be less than 20 centimetres long.
- Do a safety check and make sure your home is safe for your child to actively explore.
- Keep your child safe by watching them and helping when they need you.
- **Be SunSmart** – make sure your child has adequate sun protection when playing outdoors.

Find out more

For more information on play, learning, and a range of other topics, visit:

- playgroupwa.com.au
- bringingupgreatkids.org
- raisingchildren.net.au
- cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childhealthresources

For more information about the metropolitan **Child Development Service** phone 1300 551 827 or visit cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childdevelopment

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

This publication is provided for general education and information purposes.
Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.

© State of Western Australia, Child and Adolescent Health Service – Community Health June 2023 CAH-000926