

# The Power of Unstructured Play



## What is unstructured play?

Unstructured play is when children engage in open-ended, free play where there is no specific learning objective. The play is child-driven, meaning adults do not provide directions. Unstructured play can be done independently or with peers.

## Benefits of unstructured play

- Cultivates flexibility
- Fosters decision making skills
- Promotes curiosity, creativity and imagination
- Supports organizing, initiating, and staying focused on tasks
- Increases self-regulation and self-monitoring
- Provides a sense of freedom and control
- Develops social skills (turn taking, cooperation, effective communication, compromising, conflict resolution)
- Encourages movement

## Examples:

- Playing with blocks
- Using blankets for forts
- Inventing new games
- Running around a playground
- Coloring, drawing, and painting on blank paper or using chalk outdoors
- Creating/inventing with common materials (shoe boxes, appliance boxes, recyclable containers)
- Making musical instruments out of household items
- Water/sand play
- Dolls
- Dress up
- Toy cars
- Playing kitchen
- Playing school

Unstructured play is just as important as structured play for childhood development. It is beneficial for children to be provided opportunities to engage in each type with a goal of having a balance of both.