

Utilizing Play to Guide Children's Learning

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Welcome & Agenda

- Play Defined
- The Value of Play
- Schema's of Play
- Supporting Play



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What does play mean to you?

Write your own definition of play on your note sheet- take a few minutes to reflect and then write.

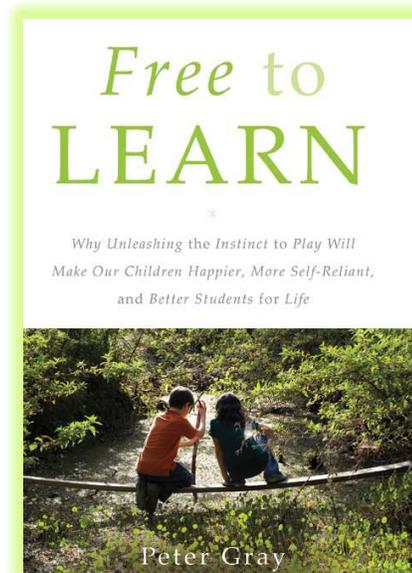
Introduce yourself to others at your table. Discuss your definition of play with others in your group and be prepared to share.



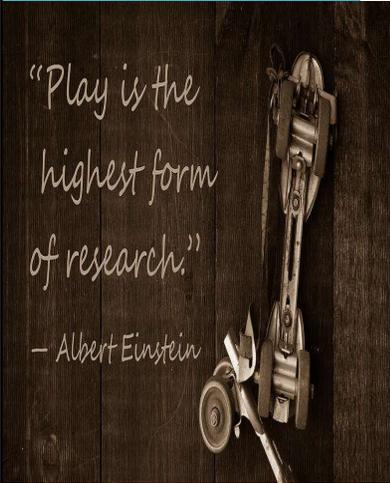
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Free to Learn by Peter Gray

Our children spend their days being passively instructed, and made to sit still and take tests—often against their will. We call this imprisonment schooling, yet wonder why kids become bored and misbehave. Even outside of school children today seldom play and explore without adult supervision, and are afforded few opportunities to control their own lives. The result: anxious, unfocused children who see schooling—and life—as a series of hoops to struggle through. — Peter Gray



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“Play is the highest form of research.”
— Albert Einstein

Five defining features of play

- Play is self-chosen and self-directed
- Play is about the process rather than a final product
- Play is guided by mental rules.
- Play is imaginative, non-literal, mentally removed in some way from “real” or “serious” life
- Play involves an active, alert, but non-stressed frame of mind.

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Play is self-chosen and self-directed

- Play is an expression of freedom. It is what one *wants* to do as opposed to what one is *obliged* to do.
- Play is not always accompanied by smiles and laughter, nor are smiles and laughter always signs of play; but play is always accompanied by a feeling of “Yes, this is what I want to do right now.”
- Players not only choose to play or not play, but they also direct their own actions during play and the ultimate freedom of exiting play.



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Play is process oriented

- Play is activity conducted primarily for its own sake. Attention is focused on the means, not the ends.
- Play often has goals, but the goals are experienced as an intrinsic part of the game, not as the sole reason for engaging in the game.
- For example, constructive play is always directed toward the goal of creating the object that the player has in mind. But notice that the primary objective in such play is the *creation* of the object, not the *having* of the object.



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Play is guided by mental rules

- Play is freely chosen activity, but it is not freeform activity.
- Play always has structure, and that structure derives from rules in the player's mind. The rules of play are the means. To play is to behave in accordance with self-chosen rules.
- The rules are not like rules of physics or biological instincts, they are mental concepts that often require conscious effort to keep in mind and follow. The rules are formed within the play and developed by the players.



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Play is imaginative

Children playing enter a realm that is physically located in the real world, makes use of props in the real world, is often about the real world, is said by the players to be real, and yet in some way is mentally removed from the real world.



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Play involves an active, alert, but non-stressed frame of mind

To successfully play, children must be actively engaged in the activity, leading their own play, and not stressed about a final outcome or product. In true play, since children are focused on process more than outcome, their minds are not distracted by fear of failure.



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Value of play

Play serves many valuable purposes.

It is a means by which children develop their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and moral capacities.

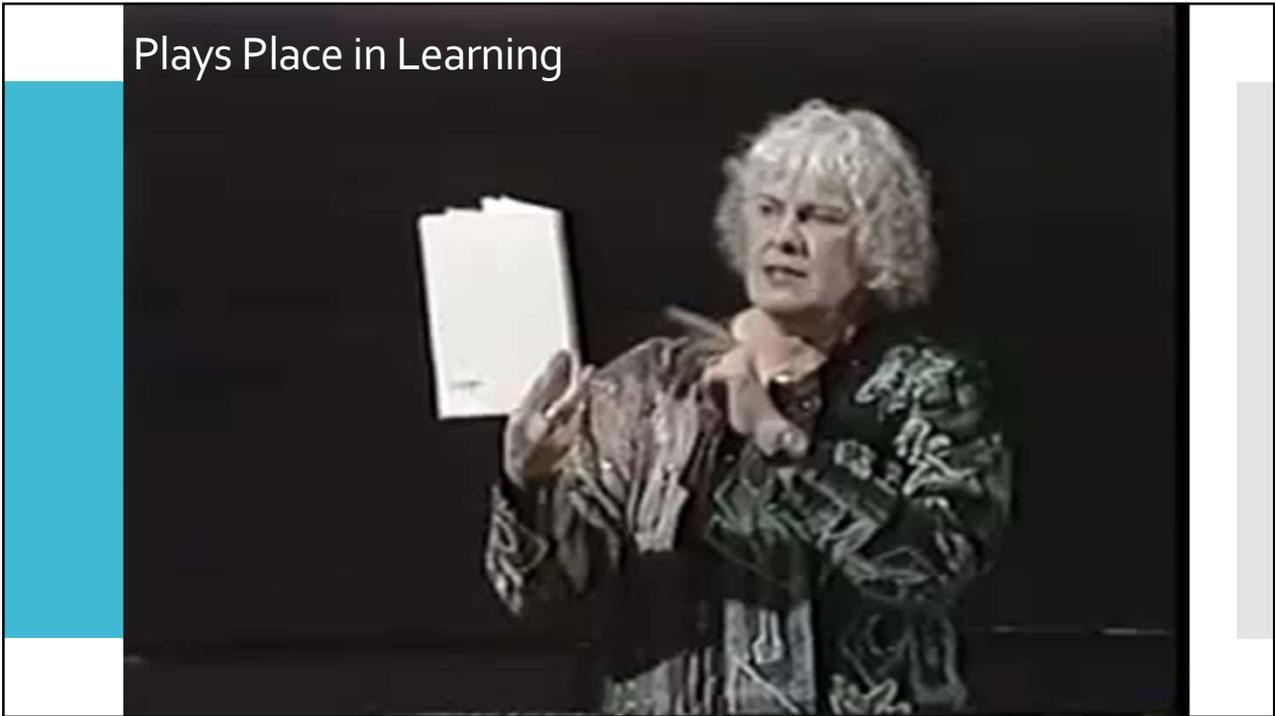
It is a means of creating and preserving friendships.

Provides a state of mind that is uniquely suited for high-level reasoning, insightful problem solving, and all sorts of creative endeavors.



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Plays Place in Learning



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What are these children learning?

- Fill in blanks
- Discuss
- Share

Playing to learn?



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What is your role in play?



Designing the environment



Providing opportunities for all children



Create a foundation for play to occur



Facilitator vs Dictator



Reflecting on the children's play

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Play Schemas

What are play schemas?
 Fancy word for the *urges* that children have to do things like *climb*, *throw* things and *hide* in small places.

Knowing the play-urges can help us to understand why children are so determined to do certain things that we might not understand. If we have no idea about the way in which a child exhibits signs of brain development, then we might think that the child is being 'difficult' or even try to stop the developmental urges themselves.

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Orientation

The urge to hang upside down, get the view from under the table or on top of the dresser and other actions that are part of the **Orientation** schema.



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Positioning

Positioning is a child's urge to manipulate objects in a variety of positions or contexts. Creating patterns, shapes, structures and different dimensions.



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Connection

Joining train tracks, clicking together pieces of blocks, running a string from one thing to another... the urge of **Connection**.

This can mean connecting *and* disconnecting too, building followed by destruction, and that can mean other peoples buildings and sandcastles get destructed when the urge gets hold.



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Trajectory

The urge to throw, drop and other actions that are all part of the **Trajectory** schema. Some other **Trajectory** actions are things like climbing up and jumping off (**Trajectory** of ones own body), putting your hand under running water (interacting with things that are already moving) and the classic, throwing and dropping (making it happen).



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Enclosure/Container

The urge to fill up cups with water, climb into cardboard boxes or kitchen draws, build fences for the animals or to put all the animals inside the circular train track, it is the **Enclosure/Container** schema.



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Transporting

Transporting can be the urge to carry many things on your hands at one time, in jars, in buckets and baskets, or even better containers with wheels.



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Enveloping

To have a sheet over your head, wrapping things in fabrics or with tape and paper - all actions seen in the **Enveloping** schema. An extension of this is peek-a-boo, now you see it now you don't, a concept that just keeps on amusing.



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Rotation

Anything that goes around anything that is circular - wheels, turning lids, watching the washing machine on spin cycle, drawing circles, spinning around on the spot, being swung around. These are all experiences of the **Rotation** schema.



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Transformation

The urge to **Transform** can come in many forms; holding all your food in your mouth for a long time to see what it turns into, mixing your juice with your fish pie, water with dirt, or helping Granny with mixing the bread dough.



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Play Across the Domains

Play skills are prevalent in all of the domains important for kindergarten readiness and school success for children as defined by MSDE. The Early Learning Assessment (ELA) uses natural assessment to observe children in their environment to determine their progress across the various learning progressions.

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Knowing is half the battle

Play can be used as a vehicle to allow children a safe method to use their urges in a developmentally appropriate manner that also aligns with predetermined goals and objectives set by educators.



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Reflection & Support of Play



A partnership to promote the VALUE OF PLAY throughout life.



Pure Play Every Day, Inc.

Empowering the facilitation of pure play for every child.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CW5XJXG>

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