

# What I Learn When I Play

Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs should offer a curriculum that meets each child's level of development at any time and provide materials, equipment and an environment that encourages constant opportunity for learning through play. As you read "When I . . .," you will learn more about how young children are learning when they are "just playing"!

## "When I . . ."

### When I play with pegboards I learn

1. One-to-one correspondence, one peg for one hole, a math skill.
2. To make and repeat patterns, a math skill.
3. Possible left to right progression, a reading skill.
4. Concepts of addition as I add one peg at a time.
5. Colors.
6. Symmetry, shapes, order and design.

### When I do cooking projects I learn

1. About nutrition, tastes and food groups.
2. How heat and cold change things.
3. Concepts of volume and measure.
4. Vocabulary.
5. Whole-art relationships, math concepts.
6. Awareness of my own and other cultures.

### When I play with blocks, cars and trucks, I learn

1. Concepts of shape, size, length and location.  
**All reading and math skills.**
2. To create and repeat patterns, a math skill.
3. To exercise my imagination.
4. To express ideas.
5. To cooperate with others.
6. To solve problems.
7. About the properties of wood.
8. To see myself from a different perspective, that of a giant.

### When I play on riding toys I learn

1. Strength, balance and large muscle coordination (legs, torso, and arms).
2. To use my energy in a constructive way.

### When I play in the dress up corner I learn

1. To be flexible in my thinking and to make decisions.
2. To express myself with my words.
3. To try on different adult roles.
4. To solve social problems through negotiation with friends.
5. To sort and organize play things.
6. To improvise and use things in a symbolic way to represent something else (abstract thinking).
7. To carry out my ideas with the cooperation of others.
8. To exercise my imagination and creativity.

### When I easel paint I learn

1. To develop my imagination and creativity.
2. Hand-eye coordination.
3. To distinguish and purposely create shapes.
4. To express my feelings and ideas.
5. That my ideas have value.
6. Relationships of space and size.
7. Concepts of symmetry, balance and design.

### When I cut with scissors I learn

1. To control the small muscles in my hand, a pre-writing skill.
2. Concepts of shape, size, color and location.
3. To exercise my imagination and creativity.



### **When I scribble and draw I learn**

1. To hold a pencil or other drawing implement and to control the pressure.
2. Hand-eye coordination.
3. To exercise my imagination and creativity.
4. That my ideas have value.
5. Concepts of shape, size, color and location.
6. To express myself with words when describing my drawing.

### **When I finger paint I learn**

1. To exercise my imagination and creativity.
2. About how colors mix to make new colors (science).
3. Concepts of shape, size, color and location.
4. Hand-eye coordination.
5. An acceptable way to make a mess and have fun sharing ideas with others who are near.

### **When I play on climbing equipment I learn**

1. Physical strength, coordination and balance.
2. To use my imagination.
3. To cooperate with others when involved in group play.
4. To solve problems.
5. Self-confidence as I develop new skills.

### **When I play rhythm instruments I learn**

1. To be flexible in my thinking and to make decisions.
2. Concepts of fast, slow, loud and soft.
3. To express myself in new and different ways.
4. "Auditory discrimination" recognizing differences in sounds, necessary for learning to read.
5. Listening skills.
6. To interpret and understand signals and cues.

### **When I play letter games I learn**

1. To recognize and name upper and lower case letters.
2. To associate letters with the sounds they represent.
3. To recognize my name and other words.

### **When I dance I learn**

1. Balance and coordination.
2. To be conscious of the moods and rhythms of the music.
3. To express myself physically.

### **When I play with puppets I learn**

1. To express my ideas with words.
2. To take on the role of someone else.
3. To use voice tones as well as words.
4. To use my imagination.

### **When I paste, glue, and collage I learn**

1. To exercise my imagination and creativity.
2. Concepts of shape, size, color and location.
3. About different textures.
4. How to create patterns and designs, a math skill.

### **When I play with playdough or clay I learn**

1. To see the shape against the background of the table, a reading skill.
2. Concepts of shapes, sizes, length and height.
3. To see negative space when cookie cutter shapes are taken away.
4. To express feelings, especially negative feelings with squeezing and pounding.
5. To exercise my imagination and creativity.
6. That the amount of a substance remains the same even when the shape changes.

### **When I play with sand I learn**

1. To exercise my imagination.
2. Concepts of size, shape and volume; empty and full.
3. How to use tools.
4. To solve problems.
5. Concepts of warm and cool, wet, damp, dry, heavy and light.
6. How to play socially with others.
7. To create my own patterns and symbols, reading and writing skills.
8. To observe changes, a science skill.

### **When I examine objects at a nature table I learn**

1. New vocabulary.
2. Concepts of texture, color, weight and size.
3. To group objects into categories, a math skill.
4. To observe likenesses and differences.
5. To appreciate nature and develop a sense of wonder.

### When I sort things I learn

1. To notice details, likenesses, differences and to form categories.
2. Concepts of color, size, and shape.
3. Numeral concepts of more and less.
4. Logical reasoning.

**All essential reading and math skills.**

### When I string beads I learn

1. Hand-eye coordination.
2. Concepts of color, shape and location.
3. Number concepts like more, less, longer and shorter. **All essential math skills.**
4. To create and reproduce patterns.
5. Pride in accomplishment.

### When I participate in circle time activities

#### I learn

1. To listen, sit still and understand spoken words.
2. That my ideas added to the discussion have value.
3. To wait when others are talking.
4. New vocabulary words.
5. To remember the words of songs and poems I have learned.
6. The names of others in the group.
7. To cooperate and be considerate of the needs of others.
8. To help plan what we will do and what we will need to do it.

### When I look at books and listen to stories I learn

1. That learning to read is important and enjoyable.
2. That letters on a page represent words.
3. To express my own thoughts, feelings and ideas better.
4. To exercise my imagination.
5. To interpret pictures to represent words and ideas.
6. To listen well to spoken language.
7. To make up my own stories.
8. To handle books with care.
9. To recognize certain words when I see them in print.
10. To use more complex language patterns in my own speech.
11. To follow the development of thoughts and ideas in the plot of a story.

**All essential reading skills.**

*Reading to children frequently is one of the best ways to ensure that they will become eager, capable readers themselves.*

### When I sing songs I learned at school I learn

1. Principles of music and rhythm.
2. Vocabulary.
3. Memory skills and sequencing.
4. To be conscious of others.
5. Various concepts emphasized in songs.
6. "Auditory discrimination" recognizing differences in sounds, necessary for learning to read.
7. Awareness and identification with my culture and other cultures.



# The Provider's Role in Nurturing Brain Growth

At birth, the parts of the brain that handle thinking, remembering and emotional and social behavior are not very developed. Our expressions of caring through touching, rocking, talking, smiling and singing are a kind of nourishment for the child. These experiences, repeated many times over the course of the day, provide the foundation for the brain's early organization.

## 1. Provide a context of responsive, warm and consistent care:

- Build a relationship with each child. When children form attachments to special people in their lives, they are more likely to grow up to be ready and eager to learn, feel secure and relate well to others.
- Respond to each child's cues and clues.
- Children never outgrow their need to be touched gently and often. Touching helps children feel secure and calm, so that they can continue to learn and grow.
- Be available to observe, praise and encourage the child's ideas, creativity and imagination.

## 2. Provide a healthy, safe and supportive environment that encourages exploration and play:

- Provide lots of sensory experiences – tasting, touching, seeing, hearing and smelling. These experiences build the connections that build children's brains



- When you give the freedom to explore, children use their senses to make discoveries:
- Follow the child's lead
- Read, sing, talk
- Let the child use his imagination
- Establish routines & rituals
- Provide a stimulating play environment
- Offer a variety of materials to encourage discovery

## 3. Recognize that each child is unique and develops at a different pace. Keep in mind children's:

- Different abilities
- Interests
- Experiences
- Temperaments
- Learning styles
- Abilities

