

# Learning Through Physical Play

Children develop in a holistic manner. Physical development should be seen as being as important in young children's development as intellectual development. Research has shown that physical activity in young children can enhance concentration, motivation, learning and well-being.

Generally, our lives have become more inactive and our children have less opportunity for physical activity each day. The reasons for our increased inactivity include:

- Excessive television viewing
- Fewer family members to play with
- Fewer safe outside play areas

Children enjoy physical play, indoors and outdoors. They revel in freedom of movement and in play that is inventive, adventurous and stimulating. Children also learn social skills as they cooperate with one another and show consideration for one another.

## **Large Muscle Development - gross motor skills**

- Walk forwards, backwards and sideways
- Walk on tip-toes (balance)
- Running, stopping and starting
- Climb up steps or a ladder with one foot leading
- Pivot around and around on feet
- Jump up and down on the spot on both feet
- Jump a distance
- Balance along a plank 18cms from the ground
- Balance on one leg for 4 seconds
- Crawl through a barrel or tunnel

These basic activities develop body management, balance, bodily co-ordination, strength, agility and confidence.

## **Fine Motor Skills**

- Building blocks
- Assembling construction materials - Duplo etc.
- Putting jigsaws together
- Grip a pencil or paintbrush
- Hammer shapes into a pegboard
- Pour water or dry sand from one container to another
- Thread beads
- Manipulate play dough

These activities promote hand-eye coordination, spatial awareness, fine motor control, accuracy, two handed coordination and manipulative strength.

## **Eye - Hand & Eye - Foot Co-ordination Skills**

- Catch a large ball between extended arms
- Kick a ball
- Pedal a tricycle along a straight line
- Push a large ball away towards a target
- Pull an empty truck around obstacles

These activities promote spatial awareness, hand - eye coordination, strength and foot & leg coordination.

## **Paint & Junk**

- Holding Brushes, pencils (fine motor skills)
- Cutting
- Spreading glue and paint
- Sprinkling glitter (fine finger movement)

## **Imaginative Play**

- Manipulating fastenings on dressing up clothes and dolls (fine manipulative skills)
- Pressing telephone buttons
- Writing shopping lists
- Wrapping parcels
- Using dustpan and brush
- Coordination in pretend cooking - setting the table

## **Sand and Water**

- Pouring, filling, stirring, pushing, pulling, moulding, digging, patting (developing fine motor skills)
- Manipulating tools
- Pouring into containers (Hand - eye co-ordination)
- Use equipment with skill

## **Physical and Outdoor Play**

- Throwing and catching
- Rolling
- Carrying and passing
- Climbing
- Swinging
- Sliding
- Cycling / driving wheeled toys
- Dancing
- Moving to action rhymes

## **Small World**

- Manipulating play people, farm animals, vehicles (fine motor skills and co-ordination)
- Threading beads
- Cars into the garage (hand - eye coordination)
- Putting furniture in the house

## **Construction Play**

- Manipulate a range of construction equipment (fine and large motor skills)
- Lifting, carrying
- Develop skills in fitting together and taking apart materials (develop hand - eye co-ordination and spatial awareness)

## **Practical Play ideas to use at Home with young children**

Young children's joy in movement leads to healthy growth by encouraging them to challenge and exercise their own bodies. Physical play is fun!

A healthy child has lots of energy. He/she needs opportunities to crawl, run, dance, climb, balance and these skills help his/her bones and muscles develop. What we need for physical play is:-

- SPACE. This could be a park or garden, the beach or field or a playground, anywhere where there is space to run freely.
- Safe equipment and safe surfaces
- Large equipment such as climbing frames, saws, planks, tyres and stepping stones.
- Small equipment such as balloons, balls, bean bags, hoops, skipping ropes, streamers, trikes, bikes and cars.
- Lots of enthusiasm and energy

Physical activities should not be beyond a child's capability. We can play simple games of catch with our children - Hop-Scotch, Follow the Leader, Statues, skipping, Ring-A-Ring-A-Rosie, throwing and catching games and Hide-and-Seek.

A great deal rests on the acquisition of fine motor skills. Children need these skills in order to become competent in many areas of life:

- Writing
- Handling tools
- Craft skills
- Using cutlery
- Holding brushes
- Handling delicate things, including living things
- Turning the pages of books

In order to accomplish these tasks children need lots of help and practice in using the fine muscles of hands, arms and fingers. We can provide many play activities to help stimulate this development.

- Clay and dough
- Large beads to thread
- Cars, farms, doll houses
- Books with pages to turn, flaps and lift up sections
- Dressing dolls / action man
- Paint brushes, crayons and pencils

## Salt Dough Recipe



Salt Dough is a wonderful product that is used to create crafts, sculptures and ornaments. It can be easily made at home using 3 basic ingredients and then placed in the oven to dry out.

### YOU WILL NEED:

A cup salt  
2 cups of flour  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of water

### INSTRUCTIONS:

1. In a large bowl mix salt and flour together.
2. Gradually stir in water. Mix well until it forms a doughy consistency.
3. Turn the dough onto the bench and kneed with your hands until smooth and combined.
4. Make your creations using the salt dough.
5. Place the salt dough creations into the oven at 180C. The amount of time needed to bake depends on the size and thickness of the salt dough creations.

### Tips & Ideas:

- Store your salt dough in an air tight container as it keeps well for a few days.
- You can paint your creations with acrylic paints and seal with varnish or polyurethane spray.
- Salt dough can also be aired dried and is an alternative to oven drying.
- Involve the kids in making the salt dough as this encourages and promotes so many learning opportunities, plus it is so much fun!



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# Modelling Dough Recipe

## You will need:

- An apron and washing-up gloves
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- 3 cups of plain flour
- 2 tablespoons of cornflour
- 1 cup of salt
- 1 cup of cold water
- 2 teaspoons of vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons of food colouring or paint

## What to do:

### Step 1



Put on an apron and washing-up gloves. Pour the flour, salt and cornflour into a mixing bowl.

### Step 2



Add the food colouring to the water, then add the coloured water and vegetable oil to the bowl.

### Step 3



Mix it together.

### Step 4



You should now have some fantastic modelling dough!

Why not make other colours by adding different food colouring to the water?

Your modelling dough should be kept in an airtight bag, then it can be used for up to a week. Remember modelling dough is great for playing with but not suitable for eating.