

Creative play (3-6 years)

Creative play

Creative play and activities have a central role in your child's overall learning and development. Preschoolers and early school-age children typically enjoy expressing ideas and exploring their world creatively – through songs, dress-ups, art, language and movement.

Why is creative play important?

The preschool and early school years can be one of the most creative times in a child's life. As your child's imagination develops, creative activities can:

- foster more creativity.
- help your child express feelings and learn communication skills.
- help your child develop, practice and improve coordination and motor skills.
- give your child a chance to try out problem-solving and thinking skills.
- help your child find new ways of looking at things.

What to expect with your child's imagination

Your **pre-schooler** will often use new songs and stories as the basis for creative play. She might love to express herself and her ideas using crayons, paints, playdough, clay, scissors, glue and paper as she experiments with texture, space and colours.

Pre-schoolers enjoy songs with repetition and simple melodies. Your pre-schooler can probably make up her own words to familiar songs, and the words often come from the events and people around her.

By **school age**, your child will probably have a clearer understanding of what's real and what's pretend. She will be able to plan new creative projects and activities involving drawing, painting, dance and music.

You will notice your school-age child's imagination becoming richer and this will be expressed in her pretend play. For example, she might think up detailed and even impossible situations and invent amazing 'machines'.

Tips for creative play with your child

Here are some ideas to enjoy creative play with your child:

- Use an empty cardboard box to make a house, a robot, a truck, an animal – whatever your child is keen on. You could cut up the box, and your child could glue things onto it or paint it.

- Make use of natural material you find. For example, collect leaves for drawing, pasting onto paper or dipping into paint.
- Keep a 'busy box' for your child. You could include things like string and coloured paper, plastic cups, paints, pencils, paste and other materials that your child can use to create pictures, collages, paintings and more.
- Instead of throwing out old clothes, start a dress-up box or bag for dramatic play. Every now and then, you could surprise your child by putting a new thing into the bag.
- At story time, encourage your child to act out roles from a story with movements or sounds. For example, your child could pretend to eat lots of different foods, like the caterpillar in *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Using movement and role play to respond to the story helps your child develop communication skills. It also helps her understand things in the real world.
- Take a saucepan, a saucepan lid and a wooden spoon – your child has got a drum kit.
- Put on a favourite CD – yours or your child's. Start dancing together and see how many moves you can come up with. It's not only fun – it's good exercise too.
- Encourage your child to march, stamp, hop, slide and twirl. Watching your child's progress with jumping and dancing can tell you how her body awareness and control are developing.
- Take photographs and create a story using paper, an app or a software programme.
- Tell stories and read books. Encourage your child to come up with new endings to stories or tell you what might happen next.
- Play word games, including silly rhymes and riddles. This gets your child using her imagination to come up with answers.
- Build pretend houses with cardboard boxes or other household odds and ends.
- Listen to different types and styles of music together. Try out different musical instruments, if you can.
- Watch and talk about fantasy movies suitable for children.
- Visit the zoo or museum or walk in the park or along the beach. These new experiences help to give your child new ideas



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

For some suggestions on rhymes, click [here](#) to download a booklet on rhymes!

Recommended Reads

- [It's ok to go up the slide: renegade rules for raising confident and creative kids](#)
- [Unplugged parenting: how to raise happy, healthy children in the digital age](#)
- [365 Games smart toddler play: Creative Time to Imagine, Grow and Learn](#)

Engage your child with simple activities at home! Check out some of these things you can do together:

- [If You're Happy and You Know It](#)
- [One, Two, Buckle My Shoe](#)
- [Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes](#)
- [Teddy Bear Song](#)
- [Animal Masks](#)