

Learning Through Play

Introducing Child-Led Play Learning Spaces



Objectives:

- To understand what is Child-Led Play?
- To understand why to include child-led play in ECD programmes.
- To see strategies used to implement Child-Led Play.

What is Child-Led Play?

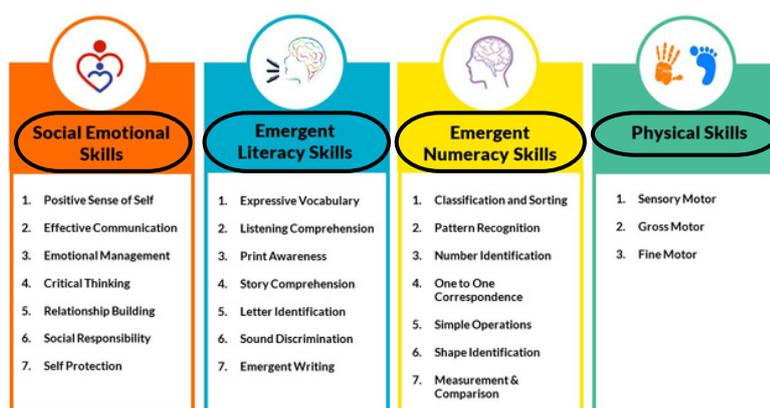
During Child-Led Play, children direct the learning. The teacher sets up the learning environment with a range of activities. The children choose where they want to play, who they will play with, and how long they will stay at play space. This is different from teacher-led activities where the teacher plans and choose how the activity will happen. Group time is an example of teacher-led play.



What is child-led play?

- Play is essential for children's development and it is the most natural form of learning for children.
- Child-Led Play provides the opportunity for children to have hands-on learning, which is the way children learn – by doing.
- Children learn by leading their own play and taking part in play which is guided by adults.
- Child-Led Play fosters emotional learning as the child has a feeling of empowerment. The child can independently select their favourite activity and there are no rules.
- Young children need active learning combining all areas on the learning skills chart and foundation skills of movement, decision making, problem solving through play, perseverance, critical thinking and conversations are needed to build strong pathways in their developing brains.

Learning Skills Set



How to do Child-Led play in to your programme?

1. After a group activity the teacher uses a planned approach to select small groups of children to make the transition to Child-Led Play learning activities.
2. There is a balance between active and quiet activities and teacher-led and child-led activities.
3. Teacher's role is to make sure there is enough materials in each play area.
4. Each play space is set up with toys and materials for self-directed play and learning.
5. Teacher ensures all play spaces are gender and disability friendly and stimulate inclusivity and awareness among children as part of their learning.
6. Each day the Child-Led Play Learning space can include:
 - a. Imagination activity
 - b. Blocks and constructions, puzzles
 - c. Sand and water play, books and pictures
 - d. Drawing and painting
7. The teacher can provide picture cues to help children understand how many children can play at an activity.
8. Children who use tactile cues can feel the raffia to know how many children can play at the activity.



How to do Child-Led Play in to your programme?

- Create a choice board for the activities that are available for children to choose from during Child-Led Play. This helps children to choose activities they are interested in.
- Some children may need to choose between 2 activities by using a choice board with real objects.

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- **Provide open-ended activities** to allow children opportunities for individual expression and development.
- **Encourage different materials and activities** for children to use the materials according to their developmental level:
 - Drawing - Children are free to draw dots, scribbly lines, letters, or recognisable pictures instead of doing colouring sheets where they need to stay within the lines, which leads to frustration for the child and the teacher.
 - Children need to develop fine muscle skills to hold a pencil, chalk or crayon. Children learn how much pressure they need to draw a line. These skills are needed before they start to write their names.

Reflection questions for teachers about literacy activities

- What strategies do you use to implement Child-Led Play with children?
- How do you make Child-Led Play inclusive for children with diverse needs, from ethnic communities or at a different stage of development?
- What did you learn from the video that you will add to your daily practice to provide Child-Led Play spaces in your programme?