

Everyday Play Meaningful Growth

A Practical Family Play Guide
for Children Aged 3 to 7



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★ Welcome

Purpose of this play guide

Welcome to Everyday Play, Meaningful Growth.

In the early years, children learn, grow, and make sense of the world in many ways through play. Play can support children's communication, creativity, confidence, social interaction, and flexible thinking, especially when it is shared with a responsive adult. This guide is intended for parents, carers, and families of children aged 3 to 7 to enjoy simple and meaningful household play.

Very often, the experiences that stay with children are the simplest ones: a shared laugh, a made-up game, a story told in a funny voice, or a few minutes of warm and focused attention, but not necessarily involving expensive materials. These everyday moments can offer children valuable opportunities to explore ideas, use language, solve problems, and enjoy connection with someone they trust.

This guide has been created to help families make the most of those moments. It offers practical play ideas that can be adapted to different ages, interests, routines, and home environments. Some activities are more suitable for younger children, some for older children, and many can be adjusted with small changes in support, pace, or level of challenge. Families are encouraged to use the guide in ways that suit their child's interests, pace, and everyday routine, choosing the activities that feel most relevant and revisiting the ones they enjoy most.

We hope this guide gives families practical ideas, encouragement, and confidence to enjoy playful moments. Through simple shared experiences, play can become a natural part of family life and a valuable way of supporting children's development, enjoyment, and connection over time.



About the Project



This guide was developed as part of an international collaborative research project "*Promoting playful learning in early childhood education - supporting holistic development and creativity in early years*", led by Principal Investigator Dr Wing Kai Fung at Liverpool Hope University.



The project focuses on children's playfulness in the early years. Specifically, how playfulness may contribute to children's social-emotional competence, cognitive skills, creativity, well-being, school readiness, and academic learning.

This guide has been informed by a recent line of research in early childhood play and playfulness, including work that explores the roles of parental play beliefs, children's playfulness, and the home play environment. Its purpose is to translate the knowledge into a practical resource that families can use with confidence.

This work was supported by **Liverpool Hope University's PVC REFine Impact Fund** and **FESS Impact Fund**. The funding has played an important role in enabling the guide to be developed and distributed to families, with the aim of widening access to practical play ideas and encouraging positive parent-child playful interaction at home.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to **Liverpool Hope University** for making both the development and distribution of this guide possible. We are also grateful to **Professor Kevin Kien Hoa Chung** from Department of Early Childhood Education, Education University of Hong Kong and **Trafford Hongkongers CIC** for their support, encouragement, and contribution to this project. Their involvement has helped shape a resource that is both research-informed and grounded in the realities of family life.



Project credits

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Part 2. Why Play Matters

A. What is playfulness? ❤️

In early childhood research, playfulness refers to a child's tendency or disposition to engage with activities in a playful way. It is shaped not only by the toys, materials, or activities available, but also by how a child approaches play. Research has identified five connected dimensions of playfulness (Barnett, 1991; Fung & Chung, 2023):

Physical spontaneity: how likely and skillfully children move and explore.

Social spontaneity: how readily they engage others in play.

Cognitive spontaneity: how imaginatively and flexibly they think.

Manifest joy: how openly they show delight and enjoyment.

Sense of humour: how much they enjoy silliness, surprise, and fun.

In everyday life, playfulness is not simply a matter of being lively, energetic, or funny. A playful child may show enjoyment, join in readily, suggest new ideas, respond imaginatively, laugh with others, or approach an activity with curiosity and flexibility. Some children express playfulness through movement and energy, while others show it through storytelling, pretend play, humour, or creative thinking. This broader view is helpful because it reminds us that playfulness can be expressed in different ways.



B. The value of play

Play matters in early childhood because it gives children opportunities to explore ideas, communicate with others, test possibilities, and make sense of their experiences in active and meaningful ways. Through play, children may practise taking turns, using language, imagining different outcomes, solving problems, and staying engaged with something that interests them.

Recent early childhood research demonstrated that playful children not only develop better social-emotional competence, executive functions, and creative thinking processes but these important skills also enable them to show better school readiness and early academic skills, such as mathematics and literacy (Fung & Chung, 2022b, 2023, 2024, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c). Taken together, these findings suggest that the value of play lies not only in the activity itself, but also in the qualities it brings to children, including curiosity, persistence, flexibility, social participation, and willingness to achieve.

C. How playfulness supports learning and development

Research suggests that playfulness may support development through several connected pathways. Socially, playful children have been found to show better prosocial skills, and they tend less to have peer problems over time. Other findings suggest that playful children can engage in school peer play more effectively, contributing to their social-emotional competence (Fung & Chung, 2022b; Fung & Chung, 2023; Fung & Chung, 2024).

Playfulness also appears to matter for children's thinking and creativity. Social spontaneity and cognitive spontaneity are particularly predictive of children's creative thinking processes. Other longitudinal work suggests that playfulness predicted children's later academic development through creative thinking processes, while parental play support may support children's executive functions and later word reading (Fung & Chung, 2025a; Fung & Chung, 2025b; Fung & Chung, 2025c). Taken together, these research findings consistently suggest that playful children are creative and resourceful learners.

Part 3. Play at Home

A. Every family can play

Play at home does not need to follow a particular formula in order to be worthwhile. Families differ in their routines, space, resources, culture, and daily pressures, and children differ in the kinds of play they enjoy. Some are drawn to movement and action, while others prefer pretending, building, drawing, chatting, singing, or crafting. In home settings, the value of play lies less in whether it looks impressive and more in whether children have opportunities to explore, take part, and stay engaged in ways that suit them. Research suggests that when children have richer and more accessible opportunities for play at home, they are more likely to show stronger object mastery motivation, such as wanting to explore materials, handle objects, and persist with manageable challenge. In turn, these qualities are linked with later school readiness (Fung & Chung, 2022a; Fung & Chung, 2023).

This offers an encouraging message for families. Household play does not depend on a special playroom, expensive toys, or long periods of free time. What matters more is whether children are given chances to try things out, combine ideas, and return to activities that interest them. Home play can therefore be shaped around what is realistic for each family, including shared moments that are brief, flexible, and built into everyday life. In this sense, play can remain both developmentally meaningful and practically manageable for a wide range of families.

Some families may use these activities with one child, while others may use them with two or more children of similar or different ages. In many cases, the same activity can be adapted through turn-taking, shared roles, or different levels of challenge so that each child can join in meaningfully. Children do not need to do exactly the same thing in the same way for shared play to be enjoyable and worthwhile.



B. Supporting play in everyday life



Supporting play in everyday life does not mean turning play into a lesson or directing every moment. Research suggests that parental play supportiveness and positive parental play beliefs are associated with children's playfulness, social-emotional competence, creative thinking, and executive functions, while these skills can facilitate later academic development. In contrast, parental academic focus was not related to children's academic skills over time. These findings suggest that warm, responsive, shared play may itself provide an important context for learning and development, without needing to incorporate formal teaching or academic knowledge (Fung & Chung, 2024; Fung & Chung, 2025a; Fung & Chung, 2025c).

In practice, supportive play often means being interested without becoming controlling. It may involve joining in, following the child's lead, adding a new idea, asking an open question, or helping the child stay with an activity a little longer. At other times, it may mean stepping back and allowing the child space to direct the play independently. This kind of involvement gives children room to explore while still benefiting from a parent's encouragement, attention, and responsiveness. Over time, these shared experiences help children feel more confident in taking part, trying ideas, and staying engaged.



C. Making use of ordinary moments

Play at home does not only happen when families set aside special “play time”. Many ordinary moments in the day can become opportunities for playful interaction. Mealtimes, bath time, getting dressed, tidying up, walking to the shops, waiting for a bus, or getting ready for bed can all include elements of talk, imagination, humour, movement, or problem solving. Young children benefit from playful experiences that are active, meaningful, socially interactive, and connected to familiar contexts, including interactions with caring adults at home (UNICEF & The LEGO Foundation, 2018). Thus, everyday routines can provide such a strong basis for play: they already contain shared attention, repeated actions, and materials that children know how to use.

Ordinary household materials can also be highly useful. Boxes, scarves, spoons, cushions, paper, tape, pegs, toy animals, socks, water, leaves, and recycled containers can all be used creatively in play. A stimulating home play environment does not depend simply on quantity of toys, but also on whether children have accessible opportunities to explore materials, try out ideas, and engage with manageable challenge. When these opportunities are available, children may be more likely to show the motivation and persistence that support later learning (Fung & Chung, 2022a).

D. Notice, repeat, and enjoy

One helpful way to support play at home is to notice what captures a child's interest and return to it. Children often show what matters to them through the things they repeat, the materials they choose, the ideas they come back to, and the moments in which they become especially absorbed, playful, or joyful. Paying attention to these patterns can help parents choose activities that feel more natural and motivating for the child.

Repeating an activity does not mean doing it in exactly the same way each time. Small changes in materials, roles, level of challenge, or conversation can keep a familiar activity interesting while still allowing the child to feel secure and capable. Research also suggests that when parents support play positively, children's playfulness may help explain why these experiences are linked with fewer peer problems and stronger social development over time. This means that the enjoyable, repeated play children experience at home may matter not only in the moment, but also in how they approach challenge, relationships, and participation with others in other contexts (Fung & Chung, 2022b; Fung & Chung, 2023; Fung & Chung, 2024).

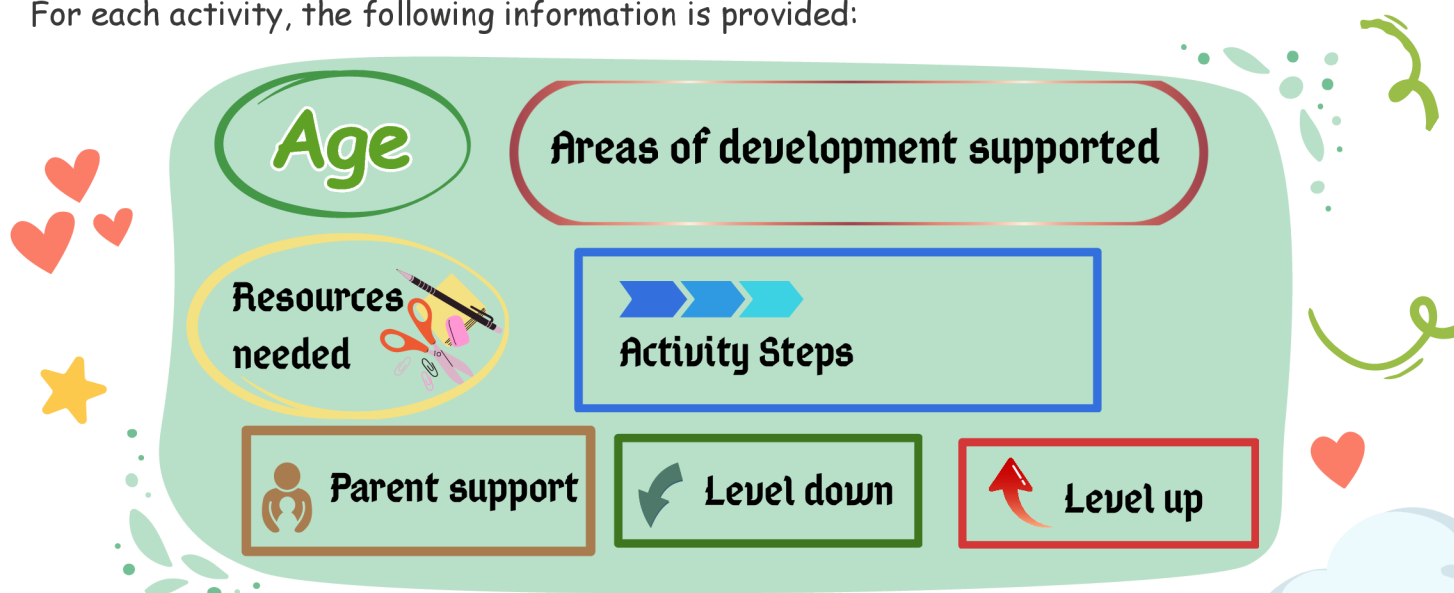


Part 4. Practical Play Activities

This section brings together practical play ideas designed to support children's playfulness in everyday family life. The activities are organised around five dimensions of playfulness: physical spontaneity, social spontaneity, cognitive spontaneity, manifest joy, and sense of humour.

Each section begins with a short introduction to that aspect of playfulness, followed by a set of activities designed mainly for children aged 3 to 5 and 5 to 7. Many of the activities can be adapted across age groups with small changes to the pace, level of challenge, or amount of adult support. When more than one child joins in, level down and level up options can also help parents adapt the same activity for children of different ages, so that each child can take part in a way that suits their age and stage.

For each activity, the following information is provided:



Families do not need to complete the activities in order. You may wish to begin with the kinds of play your child already enjoys, or choose activities that support an area you would like to encourage further. Some children may be drawn to movement and energetic play, while others may prefer imaginative, social, or humorous activities. Repeating favourite activities can also be valuable, especially when children feel confident, engaged, and ready to extend their ideas.

These play ideas are intended to be flexible and adaptable. Parents and carers are encouraged to use them in ways that suit their child's interests, family routine, and home environment. Small adjustments to materials, timing, or level of adult support can make an activity more suitable for different children and different moments.

Remember, the aim is not to complete every activity or to do everything perfectly, but to enjoy shared playful moments that feel natural, manageable, and meaningful for you and your child.



A. Physical spontaneity ♥

Physical spontaneity refers to how willing and skillful children move, explore, and respond through their bodies. It can be seen when children show energy, willingness to join in, confidence in trying movements, and enjoyment in active play. Activities that support physical spontaneity can also encourage coordination, body awareness, attention, confidence, and playful engagement.

Physical spontaneity reflects more than simply being active. In the playfulness literature, physical spontaneity is understood as children's activity level and motor coordination during play, and is considered one part of how children participate freely and confidently in playful experiences (Barnett, 1991; Wustmann Seiler et al., 2024). Recent family research has found that parental playfulness and parent-child interaction are positively associated with children's physical spontaneity, suggesting that active, responsive play with adults may help children move with greater confidence, freedom, and enjoyment during play (Wei et al., 2025).

Activities for aged 3-5 on Physical spontaneity

Children aged 3 to 5 often enjoy movement activities that are playful, repetitive, and easy to join in. Short, familiar games with plenty of encouragement can help them build confidence, coordination, body awareness, and enjoyment in active play.

1. Animal Action Parade

3-5

Gross motor development

Confidence in movement

Imagination

Body awareness

Understanding the world

Listening skills

Vocabulary

None/
Picture cards of
animals if preferred



1. Call out an animal and invite your child to move like it.
E.g. hop like a frog, stomp like an elephant, or flap like a bird.
2. Continue with different animals and vary the speed, size or direction.
3. Take turns so that your child can suggest the next animal too.



- Model the movement first if needed.
- Use an enthusiastic voice
- Join in to make activity feel shared
- Encourage your child's own ideas, even if unusual or imaginative.



- Use only two or three familiar animals and repeat them.
- Slow the pace and give extra time for copying.



- Add movement sequences:
e.g. jump like a frog, then stretch like a cat".
- Invite your child to invent a new animal or combine two animals into one.



2. Shadow Chase

3-5

Gross motor development

Spatial awareness

confidence

Visual attention

Playful interaction



Sunlight outdoors or a lamp indoors with enough space to move safely



Invite your child to look for shadows.

1. Encourage them to step on, follow, or "catch" your shadow while you move slowly around the space.
2. Then swap roles and try to catch your child's shadow.
3. You can also make the shadows stretch, shrink, wave, or dance.

- Keep movements slow and playful at first.
- Help your child notice where the shadow is and how it changes as the body moves.
- Use simple comments such as "Your shadow is running with you" or "Can you catch mine now?"
- Stay mostly in one place and make simple arm or leg movements for your child to copy or follow.
- Add challenges such as moving in different directions, jumping over the shadow, or making shadow shapes

3. Follow the Scarf

3-5

Gross motor development

Body awareness

Confidence in movement

visual tracking

Playful engagement



One light scarf, soft cloth, or ribbon



1. Hold the scarf and move it in different ways for your child to follow.
2. Move it high so they stretch up, low so they crouch down, side to side so they sway, or in circles so they turn around.
3. Also make the scarf "float", "hide", or "zoom" to invite different movements.

- Keep movements slow and clear at first.
- Use simple language such as "up high", "down low", or "round and round".
- Join in and smile so the activity feels playful rather than instructional.
- Use only a few simple movements, such as up, down, and side to side. Pause between each one so your child has more time to respond.
- Invite your child to lead the scarf movement while you follow. You can also add short movement sequences, such as "reach up, turn around, then crouch down".





Activities for aged 5-7 on Physical spontaneity

Children aged 5 to 7 often enjoy movement activities that include challenge, choice, and opportunities to take the lead. Repeating familiar games while adding small changes can help them build confidence, coordination, and enjoyment in active play.

4. Balloon Balance Challenge

5-7

One balloon



Gross motor development

Body control



Balance

Coordination

concentration

perseverance

1. Blow up a balloon and keep it in the air without letting it touch the ground.
2. Try using different body parts, such as hands, elbows, knees, shoulders, or feet.
3. Count how many touches your child manage before the balloon falls
4. Or work together to keep it moving for as long as possible.



- Encourage your child to try different ways of moving and balancing, rather than getting it "right".
- Use comments such as, "What could you try next?" or "You kept it up for longer this time."
- Join in if your child enjoys shared challenge and playful competition.
- Allow hands only
- Remove the counting element
- Tap the balloon gently back towards them to help them stay involved.
- Add extra rules, e.g. using a different body part each time
- Moving around the room while keeping the balloon up
- Or trying to reach a shared target together.



5. Obstacle Path Adventure

5-7

Gross motor development

Balance

Spatial awareness

Motor planning

Coordination

Flexible thinking

Confidence

Cushions, chairs, masking tape, boxes, or safe household items

1. Create a simple obstacle path using available materials.

2. Your child might step over cushions, crawl under a chair, walk along a tape line, jump into a marked space, or weave around objects.

3. Walk through the path together first, then invite your child to complete it.

4. After trying it once, encourage them to help redesign or add to the course.



- Check that the space is safe and that the level of challenge is manageable.
- Support your child by describing the path clearly and giving encouragement
- Questions such as "Which part comes next?" can help your child think and plan.



- Keep the path short and use only two or three simple actions.
- Demonstrate each step first and stay nearby for support.



- Invite your child to design the obstacle path, explain the rules, or complete it in different ways, such as sideways, backwards, or while carrying a soft toy.

6. Movement Dice Challenge

5-7

Gross motor development

Flexibility

Attention

Playful decision making

Turn Taking

Planning

A large dice, or number and movement cards

1. Assign a movement to each number or card. E.g. 1 = star jump, 2 = hop on one foot, 3 = squat, 4 = spin, 5 = toe touch, 6 = high knee march.

2. Take turns rolling the dice and carrying out the movement.

3. You can also roll twice to combine number and action



- Help your child remember the movements and model them if needed.
- Allow your child to suggest new movements or rules.
- Encourage effort, creativity, and confidence in trying different movements.



- Use fewer movement choices and keep the actions simple and familiar, E.g. 1 = jump, 2 = stomp, 3 = clap, 4 = spin, 5 = stretch, 6 = march
- Remove the number element and choose one movement at a time.



- Add two-step instructions
- Timed challenges
- Let your child create and decide the movement rules for the game.

B. Social spontaneity



Social spontaneity refers to how readily children join others in play, respond to social interaction, and share ideas in playful situations. It can be seen when children show interest in taking turns, joining in, leading or following during play, and enjoying shared interaction with others. In research on playfulness, social spontaneity is one of the key dimensions that helps explain how children participate in playful social experiences (Barnett, 1991; Fung & Chung, 2023).

Research suggests that social spontaneity may be especially important for how children participate in shared play and manage interaction with others. In the study by Fung and Chung (2024), children's social spontaneity was the only aspect of playfulness that significantly predicted more social play and fewer reticent behaviours in kindergarten, and these play behaviours helped explain the link between parental play support and children's social competence in school. Other findings suggest that social spontaneity also helped explain the indirect relationship between parental play support and children's convergent thinking, indicating that children who engage more readily and flexibly with others in play may also benefit from shared idea-building and collaborative thinking (Fung & Chung, 2025a).

Activities for aged 3-5 on Social spontaneity

Children aged 3 to 5 often build social spontaneity through simple, familiar, and enjoyable play with a trusted adult. At this stage, children benefit from playful experiences that help them notice others, take turns, join in, share ideas, and respond during interaction. Repeated social play with warmth and encouragement can help them grow in confidence, participation, and enjoyment when playing with others.

1. Mirror Me

3-5

None



Social attention

Turn taking



1. Stand or sit facing your child.

2. Begin by making a simple movement, such as raising your arms, clapping, swaying, or making a funny face.

3. Invite your child to copy you like a mirror.

4. After a few turns, swap roles and let your child lead while you copy them.

Body awareness

Playful interaction

Imitation



- Keep movements clear and simple at first.
- Use eye contact, smiles, and encouraging comments to help your child stay engaged.
- Respond warmly when your child takes the lead.

- Use only one movement at a time and keep the pace slow.
- Stay with familiar actions such as clapping or waving.

- Add short movement sequences, themed actions or facial expressions, such as moving like an animal or pretending to be sleepy, excited, or surprised.



3-5

Social confidence
Imagination

Turn taking
Flexible role play

Language

2. Role-Swap Helpers



Optional simple props, e.g. a spoon, a toy phone, a bag, or a soft toy



1. Invite your child to pretend to be the grown-up while you follow their playful instructions.
2. For example, they may tell you to tidy toys, feed a teddy, go shopping, or walk like a robot.
3. Then swap roles so you both have a turn leading and following.



- Follow your child's ideas with enthusiasm and model playful cooperation.
- Use simple language to extend the play, such as "What should I do next?" or "Can you show me how?"



- Keep the pretend scenario short and familiar, e.g. feeding a toy or putting something in a bag.



- Add a short storyline or a problem to solve, e.g. helping a toy get ready, find something, or visit a pretend place.

3. Tea Party Turn-Taking

3-5

Turn taking
Social language

Pretend play
Interaction skills

Sharing



Toy cups and plates, or safe household items for pretend serving



1. Set up a simple pretend tea party with your child and a few toys.
2. Take turns serving drinks, offering food, asking for items, and replying politely.
3. You can add simple pretend choices, such as "Would teddy like tea or juice?"



- Model simple social language and give your child time to respond.
- Keep the pace relaxed and help them stay involved by offering choices and joining in the pretend play.



- Use only one or two toys
- Focus on simple actions such as pouring, serving, and passing.



- Add guests, extra choices, or a simple event such as a birthday tea party or picnic.



Activities for aged 5-7 on Social spontaneity

Children aged 5 to 7 often enjoy social play that includes shared ideas, roles, choices, and small challenges to solve together. Repeated opportunities for cooperative and imaginative play can help them strengthen confidence, communication, and flexibility in social interaction.

4. Build-a-Story Relay

5-7

None, or an optional prop or picture prompt



Listening
Turn taking

Imagination
Social communication

Shared thinking



1. Begin a brand-new story with one simple sentence, such as "One day, a small rabbit found a mysterious box."
2. Invite your child to add the next sentence.
3. Continue taking turns with each person adding just one sentence at a time.
4. Let the story develop freely and see where your shared ideas take it.



- Listen carefully to your child's ideas and build on them without correcting too quickly.
- Encourage turn taking and shared thinking by using prompts such as "What happened next?"



- Keep the story short and use familiar characters or settings.
- Offer more prompts if your child needs help to continue.



- Add story rules, such as including a problem to solve, a surprise object, a particular setting, or a specific character.



5. Mystery Bag Team Challenge

5-7

Cooperation
Flexible thinking

Communication
Shared problem solving

Imagination



A bag and a few safe household objects



1. Place several objects in a bag, e.g. a spoon, cup, block, sock, or toy animal.
2. Take turns choosing one item without looking.
3. Together, think of a playful way to use it
4. For example, a scarf might become a river, a cape, or a hiding place for a toy.



- Encourage your child to explain their ideas and build on them together.
- Keep the focus on teamwork, trying ideas, and solving the playful challenge together

- Use only a few familiar objects
- Offer one simple challenge at a time.

- Invite your child to create the challenge for you.
- Combine two objects in one task
- Explain why one idea might work better than another.

6. Puppet Problem Solvers

5-7

Perspective taking
Social understanding

Empathy
Communication

Cooperative problem solving



Two puppets, soft toys, or dolls



1. Use two puppets or toys to act out a simple social problem.
2. For example, one toy feels left out, two toys want the same object, or one toy is upset after a game.
3. Invite your child to help the characters about what they could say or do next.
4. Take turns acting out different possible solutions.



- Keep the tone gentle and playful.
- Encourage your child to think about feelings, choices, and helpful responses without turning the activity into a lesson.
- Ask open questions e.g. "What could this puppet do now?" or "How do you think the other one feels?"

- Use very simple problems
- Provide only one clear choice to discuss.

- Add more than one possible solution
- Invite your child to invent their own social scenario



C. Cognitive spontaneity

Cognitive spontaneity refers to how imaginatively and flexibly children think during play. It can be seen when children suggest new ideas, use objects in unusual ways, imagine different possibilities, or adapt a play scenario as it develops. In research on children's playfulness, cognitive spontaneity is one of the five key dimensions used to describe how children engage in playful experiences (Barnett, 1991; Fung & Chung, 2023).

Research suggests that cognitive spontaneity may be especially important for children's creativity and flexible thinking. Recent evidence showed that cognitive spontaneity helped explain the link between parental play support and children's divergent thinking, suggesting that children who are more willing to invent, transform, and explore ideas in play may develop richer creative thinking processes (Fung & Chung, 2025a). Other findings indicate that cognitive spontaneity predicted children's creative thinking processes and their academic skills over time (Fung & Chung, 2025b). Research on pretend play has also highlighted the role of imaginative play in supporting divergent thinking and cognitive flexibility in childhood (Russ, 2021).

Activities for aged 3-5 on Cognitive spontaneity

Children aged 3 to 5 often develop cognitive spontaneity through playful experiences that invite them to notice patterns, imagine different possibilities, and use familiar objects in new ways. Short, open-ended activities with simple materials can help them build confidence in exploring ideas, making choices, and thinking flexibly during play.

1. Pattern Detective

3-5

Blocks, coloured cards, or toy animals



Pattern awareness
Visual discrimination



1. Create a simple pattern using objects, such as red blue red blue, or big small big small.
2. Invite your child to look carefully and continue the pattern.
3. Once they are confident, encourage them to make their own pattern for you to copy.

Attention
Flexible thinking



Early reasoning



- Keep the pattern short and clear at first.
- Use simple language such as "What comes next?" or "Can you make one for me now?"
- Encourage your child to notice similarities and differences without rushing them.
- Use only two items or colours
- Repeat the same pattern several times.
- Try more complex patterns, such as red red blue
- Invite your child to sort and arrange objects in their own sequence.



3-5

Flexible thinking
Creative idea generation

Symbolic play
Imagination

Language

2. What Else Could It Be?



One familiar household object, such as a spoon, scarf, cardboard tube, or box



1. Show your child an everyday object and ask, "What else could it be?"
2. For example, a spoon might become a microphone, a magic wand, or a tiny boat.
3. Take turns suggesting different pretend uses and acting some of them out together.



- Model one or two simple ideas first if needed.
- Accept unusual or silly answers warmly and show interest in how your child explains them.
- Keep the atmosphere playful and curious.



- Use large, familiar objects
- Give more examples before asking your child to suggest one.



- Invite your child to choose an object
- Lead the game, or combine two objects in one pretend idea.

3. Finish the Picture

3-5

Visual imagination
Flexible thinking

Symbolic representation
fine motor development

Creativity



Paper and crayons or pencils



1. Draw one simple shape or mark on a piece of paper, such as a circle, line, zigzag, or dot.
2. Invite your child to turn it into something else. For example, a circle might become a sun, a face, or a wheel.
3. Take turns creating and finishing simple picture beginnings.



- Praise unusual ideas and avoid correcting the picture.
- Ask, "What did it become?" or "Can you tell me about your picture?"



- Use large, simple shapes and model one example first.



- Invite your child to combine two shapes into one picture
- Create a short story about the finished drawing.



Activities for aged 5-7 on Cognitive spontaneity

Children aged 5 to 7 often enjoy play that allows them to invent, plan, test ideas, and change things as they go. Activities that include imagination, choice, and open-ended problem solving can help them strengthen flexible thinking, creativity, and confidence in developing their own ideas.

4. Treasure Map Maker

5-7

Paper, pencils, crayons, and a small object to hide



Symbolic thinking
Spatial awareness

Problem solving
Imagination

Planning



1. Invite your child to hide a small "treasure" somewhere in the room or home.
2. Then ask them to draw a map showing how to find it. They can use simple and clear landmarks, symbols, or arrows.
3. When the map is ready, share it with a family member as a challenge and use it to find the treasure.
4. Afterwards, swap roles so that you make one for your child.



- Remind them to include enough clues to help find the treasure, e.g. where to start, what to look for, and when to turn.
- Once the map is finished, let the map guide the search.

- Keep the hiding place close.
- Use only one or two landmarks.

- Add clues, symbols, or a short story to go with the map
- Invite your child to create a multi-step treasure trail.



5. Invent a Toy

5-7

Creative thinking
Design thinking

Problem solving
Flexible use of materials

Planning



Paper, tape, boxes, recycled materials, string, or craft items

1. Invite your child to invent a new toy or gadget using simple materials.
2. Ask them to decide what it does, how it works, and what it should look like.
3. Once it is made, encourage them to show how it is used or explain it to someone else.

- Focus on your child's idea rather than neatness or a finished product.
- Ask open questions such as "What will it do?" or "How could it move?"
- Support their planning without taking over.
- Offer a simple starting idea, such as making a toy for a teddy or a vehicle for a small figure.
- Invite your child to improve the toy, add extra features
- Design packaging or instructions for how it works.

6. Different Ending Story Maker

5-7

Imagination
Storytelling

Flexible thinking
Perspective taking

Creative language use



A familiar storybook, or a short story told aloud

1. Read or tell a short familiar story.
2. Then ask your child to change the ending.
3. They might solve the problem in a different way, introduce a new character, or decide that something unexpected happens instead.
4. Take turns offering ideas and building the new version together.

- Show interest in your child's ideas, even if they are unusual.
- Ask questions such as "What would happen next?" or "How would the character feel?" to help them extend the story.
- Use a very familiar story and offer two possible alternative endings to choose from.
- Invite your child to create more than one new ending
- Write and illustrate their favourite version afterwards.

D. Manifest joy



Manifest joy refers to the open expression of delight, enthusiasm, and positive feeling during play. It can be seen when children smile, laugh, show excitement, become fully engaged, or visibly enjoy what they are doing (Barnett, 1991). Recent work continues to describe manifest joy as the degree of exuberance, enthusiasm, and heightened positive emotion children show in play (Wustmann Seiler et al., 2024).

Research findings suggest that manifest joy may matter for the emotional tone and quality of shared play. Children who show higher levels of manifest joy may bring enthusiasm and a more positive atmosphere to group play, which can contribute to smoother social interaction (Fung & Chung, 2023). Recent evidence also suggested how parental playfulness may promote children's manifestation of joy (Seal et al., 2025). These findings suggest that joyful, shared play may support not only children's enjoyment in the moment, but also the warmth and engagement that help play feel rewarding for both children and families.

Activities for aged 3-5 on Manifest Joy

Children aged 3 to 5 often show manifest joy through simple, lively, and sensory-rich play that is easy to join in. Short playful activities with repetition, movement, colour, and shared attention can help them express delight, stay engaged, and enjoy playful moments with confidence.

1. Bubble Burst Race

3-5

Bubble solution and bubble wand



Visual tracking

Gross motor development



Shared enjoyment

Playful engagement

Attention



1. Blow a few bubbles and invite your child to pop them before they reach the ground.
2. Try blowing them high, low, near, or far to encourage different kinds of movement.
3. Take turns being the bubble blower and bubble popper.

- Keep the pace playful and manageable.
- Use warm comments such as "You caught that one" or "That bubble floated so high".
- Allow plenty of time for your child to watch, chase, and respond.
- Blow only a few bubbles at a time
- Keep the bubbles close to your child.
- Add simple challenges, such as popping with one hand, or jumping to reach a bubble.
- Counting how many can be popped in one turn.



2. Parachute Laugh Lift

3-5

Shared enjoyment
Social interaction
Attention

Gross motor development
Playful engagement

Coordination
Anticipation

A light sheet,
blanket, large
scarf, or soft
fabric



1. Hold the edges of the sheet together with your child.
2. Gently lift it up high, then lower it down again.
3. You can make the fabric float slowly, lift it quickly, or hide underneath it together before popping out.
4. Repeat the game in different ways, such as making "waves", lifting it like a balloon, or counting before going underneath.



- Keep the movement gentle and playful so your child feels secure and included.
- Use warm, lively language such as "Up it goes", "Here we come", or "Ready to pop out?"
- Use slower movements and shorter turns.
- Hold the fabric together on one side only if your child finds it easier
- Add playful variations, e.g. bigger or smaller waves
- Putting a soft toy (e.g., small plastic ball) on it while waving.

3. Giggle Freeze Dance

3-5

Gross motor development
Emotional expression

Self-control
Shared enjoyment

Rhythm

Music player



1. Play music and invite your child to dance freely.
2. When the music stops, everyone freezes in place.
3. Each time the music pauses, encourage a playful pose, facial expression, or "freeze like" theme, such as freezing like a superhero, a robot, or a sleepy cat.



- Model playful participation and allow laughter and mistakes to stay part of the activity.
- Keep the atmosphere light and encouraging, and let your child suggest new freeze ideas.
- Use slower music and simple freeze positions. Keep the stopping and starting predictable.
- Add more specific themes
- Ask your child to lead the music controls
- Create a sequence of two different freeze poses in one round.



Activities for aged 5-7 on Manifest Joy

Children aged 5 to 7 often enjoy playful experiences that combine enjoyment with choice, movement, imagination, and small elements of reflection. Familiar activities can still feel joyful at this age, especially when children are given opportunities to take the lead, add their own ideas, and share the experience with others.

4. Treasure Hunt for Happy Things

5-7

Positive attention
Social interaction

Observation
Shared enjoyment

Language



None, or a small
basket if preferred



1. Invite your child to look around the room, garden, or home and find things that make them smile or feel happy.
2. These might be favourite toys, colours, textures, or objects connected to pleasant memories.
3. Talk together about what they chose and why.



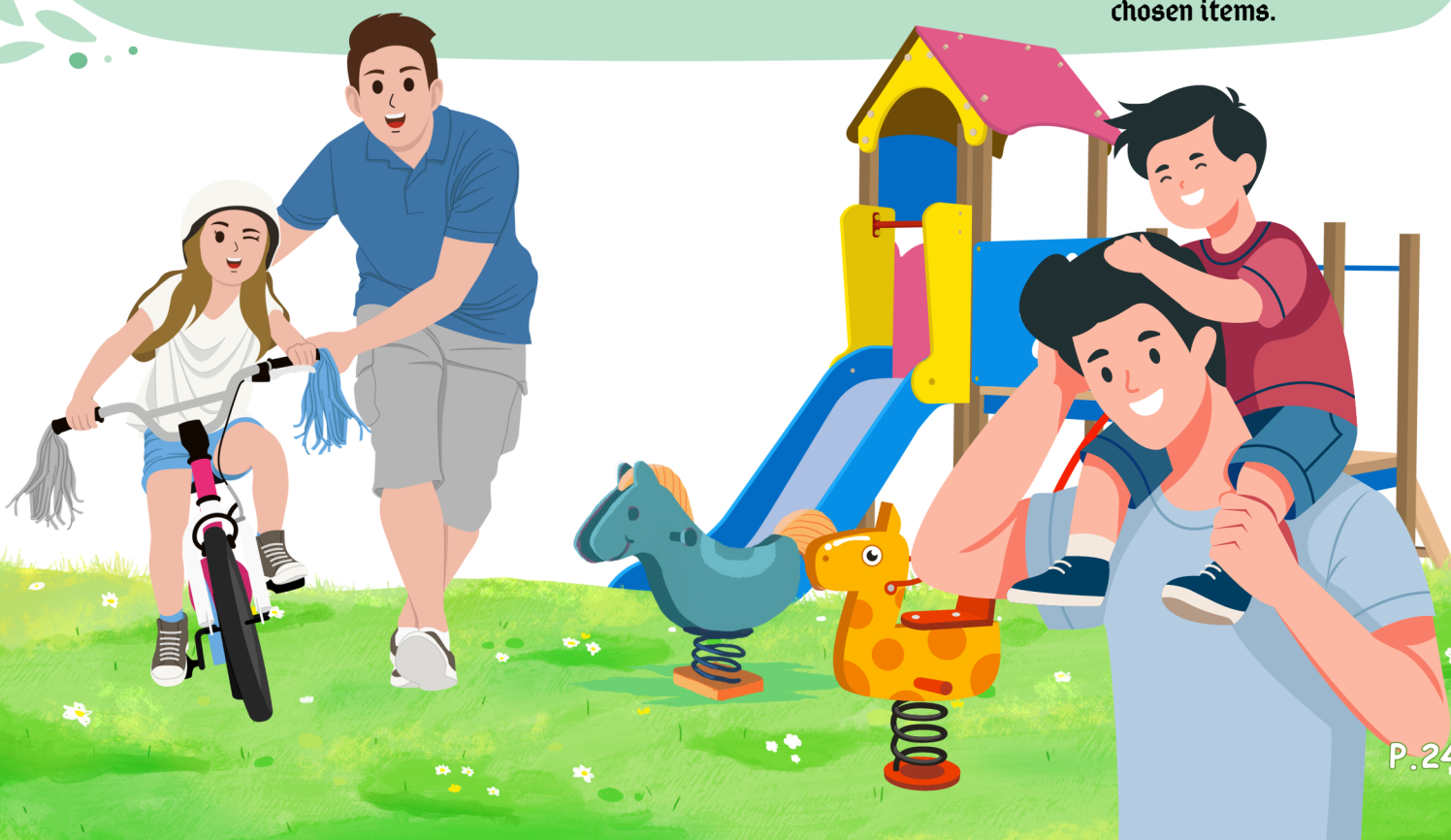
- Accept your child's choices warmly and show interest in their reasons.
- Use simple prompts such as "What do you like about this one?" or "Shall we find one more?"
- Keep the tone light and encouraging.



- Offer two or three choices in one small space rather than searching widely.



- Ask your child to sort their "happy things" into groups,
- Explain their favourites, or create a little display
- Show-and-tell using the chosen items.



5. Joy Jar

5-7

Emotional awareness
Shared conversation

Positive noticing
Reflection

Language



A jar or box, slips of paper, crayons or pencils



1. Decorate a jar or box together.
2. Invite your child to draw or write one playful, happy, or enjoyable moment from the day and place it inside.
3. At the end of the week, look through the notes together and talk about the moments they chose.



- Keep the focus on simple, everyday moments rather than "big" events.
- If your child finds it hard, offer gentle prompts such as "What made you smile today?" or "Anything fun we did together?"



- Use drawings only,
- Complete the activity orally while you write the note.



- Invite your child to sort the notes into themes,
- Choose a favourite moment to retell in detail.

6. Celebration Parade

5-7

Shared enjoyment
Gross motor development

Creative expression
Family connection

Confidence
rhythm



Music, scarves, ribbons, paper streamers, or simple homemade props



1. Invite your child to create a short celebration parade around the room.
2. They can choose how to move, such as marching, twirling, stepping proudly, or waving props in the air.
3. Add cheerful sounds, claps, or short phrases. Take turns leading the parade.
4. You can also decide on a theme, such as a birthday parade, rainbow parade, or animal parade.



- Join in with energy and encouragement.
- Let your child take the lead and respond positively to their movement ideas, sound effects, or parade theme.
- Keep the atmosphere lively and playful rather than performance-focused.



- Keep the parade short and use only one or two simple movements.
- Reduce the number of props if needed.



- Invite your child to design a full parade route
- Add stopping points for poses or cheers
- Or create a short ending performance together.



E. Sense of humour

Sense of humour refers to children's enjoyment of silliness, surprise, playful incongruity, and shared amusement. It can be seen when children laugh at something unexpected, invent a funny idea, play with sounds or words, or enjoy joking with others. Research continues to describe sense of humour as one of the five key dimensions that helps explain how children participate in and enjoy play (Barnett, 1991; Fung & Chung, 2023).

Evidence suggests that sense of humour may matter for both children's social experiences and the emotional quality of shared play. Studies of humorous peer play indicate that humour can support children's social understanding and positive relationships, while observational research in early childhood settings shows that shared humour often helps children build connection, enjoyment, and mutual engagement during everyday play (Paine et al., 2025; Stenius et al., 2022). Recent family research has also reported how playful parent-child interaction may help children express and enjoy humour more freely in play (Seal et al., 2025). Thus, a sense of humour may support not only laughter in the moment, but also the warmth, flexibility, and shared enjoyment that help play feel rewarding for both children and families.

Activities for aged 3-5 on Sense of Humour

Children aged 3 to 5 often enjoy humour that is visual, playful, repetitive, and easy to understand. Activities that include funny faces, mixed-up ideas, playful sounds, and familiar surprises can help them share laughter, notice incongruity, and join in with confidence.

1. Funny Face Challenge

3-5

None, or a mirror if preferred



Emotional expression
Shared attention



1. Take turns making funny faces for each other to copy.
2. You might puff your cheeks, open your mouth wide, scrunch your nose, or make a very surprised face.
3. Invite your child to invent their own funny face and let you copy it too.

Playful interaction
Confidence in participation

Imitation



- Keep the tone light and encouraging.
- Exaggerate your expressions and respond warmly to your child's ideas.
- If your child is hesitant, begin with simple and familiar expressions.
- Use only two or three simple expressions.
- Make them slowly.
- Add themes such as "sleepy face", "angry dragon face", or "silly monster face".
- Turn the faces into a short guessing game.

2. Silly Hat Factory

3-5

Imagination
Humour

Creative expression
Fine motor development

Shared play



Paper, tissue paper, stickers, string, foil, or other simple craft materials



1. Make funny hats together using simple materials.
2. Encourage your child to decide what kind of hat it will be, such as a giant birthday hat, a wobbly animal hat, or a very tall chef's hat.
3. Once the hats are ready, put them on and enjoy acting silly together.



- Show interest in unusual ideas and avoid focusing on neatness.
- Use comments such as "That is a very surprising hat" or "Who would wear a hat like this?" to extend the humour.
- Prepare a simple base hat shape in advance.
- Let your child add only one or two decorations.
- Invite your child to create hats for toys as well.
- Invent a short story about who wears each hat and why.

3. Mixed-Up Animal Parade

3-5

Gross motor development
Flexible thinking

Imagination
Humour

Language



None, or animal picture cards if preferred



1. Invite your child to invent a mixed-up animal, such as a barking duck, a hopping elephant, or a roaring rabbit.
2. Act out the animal together by copying how it moves and sounds.
3. Take turns inventing new silly animals and parading around the room like them.

- Model one or two examples first and respond with laughter and interest.
- Encourage your child's ideas even if they are very unusual or do not make logical sense.
- Use familiar animals
- Simply swap one sound or one movement.
- Invite your child to combine three animals
- Make up a name for the creature
- Describe where the animal lives and what it likes to do.



Activities for aged 5-7 on Sense of Humour

Children aged 5 to 7 often enjoy humour that includes absurdity, playful rule-breaking, word play, and imaginative exaggeration. At this stage, they may take pleasure in inventing funny combinations, noticing what is unexpected, and making others laugh through their own ideas.

4. Nonsense Chef

5-7

Toy food, pretend kitchen items, or simple household objects for pretend cooking

Imagination
Language

Flexible thinking
Shared storytelling

Humour



1. Pretend to cook the most ridiculous meal possible.
2. Your child might make banana soup with sock sprinkles, broccoli ice cream, or spaghetti with toy car toppings.
3. Take turns inventing recipes, describing the ingredients, and pretending to serve the dish.



- Accept absurd ideas with enthusiasm and build on them.
- Ask questions such as "What should we add next?" or "Who would eat this special dish?" to extend the play.

- Start with one funny ingredient and one familiar food item.



- Invite your child to create a full menu
- Name the restaurant
- Advertise the funniest dish of the day.



5. Backwards Day Mini Game

5-7

Body awareness

Self-control

Humour

Playful rule understanding

Flexible thinking



None



1. Choose a few simple actions to do in a silly backwards way.

2. For example, you might walk backwards a few steps, wear a hat backwards, say a greeting in a funny backwards-sounding voice, or do a movement in reverse order.

3. Take turns suggesting a new backwards idea and trying it out together.



- Keep the activity safe and clearly playful.
- Help your child notice what makes the action funny or unusual.
- Use only a few simple examples and avoid anything that could cause confusion in everyday safety situations.



- Use only one or two easy ideas
- Such as walking backwards slowly or putting on a hat backwards.



- Invite your child to invent a short "backwards routine" with several silly actions in sequence.

6. Silly Sound News Reporter

5-7

Expressive language

Confidence

Humour

Creative thinking

Perspective taking



Optional homemade microphone or toy microphone



1. Pretend to be a news reporter giving a very serious report about something very silly.

2. For example, "Breaking news: a dancing potato has escaped into the garden."

3. Invite your child to use funny voices, made-up sound effects, or exaggerated serious expressions while reporting the event.

4. Take turns being the reporter and the audience.



- Model the idea first if needed and show that unusual or exaggerated reports are welcome.
- Encourage your child to add details, sound effects, or an unexpected ending.



- Offer a simple starting idea
- Keep the report very short.



- Invite your child to report on two silly events.
- Interview a toy witness
- Or create a whole "news programme" with different segments.



Part 5. Activity Index

1. Activity Index by Play Type

This index helps families find activities according to the kind of play their child most enjoys. While many activities include more than one kind of play, each has been listed here under its main play focus to make the guide easier to use.

Movement play

Animal Action Parade	p. 10
Shadow Chase	p. 11
Follow the Scarf	p. 11
Balloon Balance Challenge 	p. 12
Obstacle Path Adventure	p. 13
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Parachute Laugh Lift	p. 23
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27

Social play

Mirror Me	p. 14
Tea Party Turn-Taking 	p. 15
Build-a-Story Relay	p. 16
Mystery Bag Team Challenge	p. 17
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 17
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Funny Face Challenge	p. 26

Object play

Mystery Bag Team Challenge	p. 17
Pattern Detective	p. 18
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Invent a Toy	p. 21

Pretend play

Role-Swap Helpers	p. 15
Tea Party Turn-Taking 	p. 15
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 17
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Silly Hat Factory	p. 27
Nonsense Chef	p. 28

Creative play

What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Finish the Picture	p. 19
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Invent a Toy	p. 21
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
Joy Jar	p. 25
Silly Hat Factory	p. 27
Silly Sound News Reporter	p. 29

Story play

Build-a-Story Relay	p. 16
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 17
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
Silly Sound News Reporter	p. 29

Sensory play

Follow the Scarf	p. 11
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Parachute Laugh Lift	p. 23
Treasure Hunt for Happy Things 	p. 24

2. Activity Index by Situation

This index helps families choose activities according to the kind of moment they have available, whether they need something quick, quiet, active, indoor, or outdoors.

Indoor play

Mirror Me	p. 14
Role-Swap Helpers	p. 15
Tea Party Turn-Taking	p. 15
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 16
Pattern Detective	p. 18
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Finish the Picture	p. 19
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Invent a Toy	p. 21
Joy Jar	p. 25
Funny Face Challenge	p. 26
Silly Hat Factory	p. 27
Silly Sound News Reporter	p. 29

Outdoor play

Animal Action Parade	p. 10
Shadow Chase	p. 11
Obstacle Path Adventure	p. 13
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Treasure Hunt for Happy Things	p. 24
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27

Quick 5-min play

Follow the Scarf	p. 11
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
Mirror Me	p. 14
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Funny Face Challenge	p. 26

Quiet play

Tea Party Turn-Taking	p. 15
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 17
Pattern Detective	p. 18
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Finish the Picture	p. 19
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
Joy Jar	p. 25

Higher energy play

Animal Action Parade	p. 10
Shadow Chase	p. 11
Balloon Balance Challenge	p. 12
Obstacle Path Adventure	p. 13
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Parachute Laugh Lift	p. 23
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27

3. Activity Index by Areas of Development

This index helps families choose activities according to the areas of development they may wish to support. Many activities support more than one area, but each is listed here under its main focus to make the guide easier to use.

Communication and language

Tea Party Turn-Taking	p. 15
Build-a-Story Relay	p. 16
Puppet Problem Solvers 	p. 17
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
Nonsense Chef	p. 28
Silly Sound News Reporter	p. 29

Imagination and creativity

Role-Swap Helpers	p. 15
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Finish the Picture	p. 19
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Invent a Toy 	p. 21
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
Silly Hat Factory	p. 27
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27
Nonsense Chef	p. 28
Silly Sound News Reporter	p. 29

Confidence and participation

Animal Action Parade	p. 10
Follow the Scarf	p. 11
Balloon Balance Challenge	p. 12
Mirror Me	p. 14
Role-Swap Helpers 	p. 15
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Funny Face Challenge	p. 26

Gross motor development & coordination

Animal Action Parade	p. 10
Shadow Chase 	p. 11
Follow the Scarf	p. 11
Balloon Balance Challenge	p. 12
Obstacle Path Adventure	p. 13
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Parachute Laugh Lift	p. 23
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27

Social interaction & turn taking

Mirror Me	p. 14
Role-Swap Helpers	p. 15
Tea Party Turn-Taking 	p. 15
Build-a-Story Relay	p. 16
Mystery Bag Team Challenge	p. 17
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 17
Celebration Parade	p. 25

Flexible thinking & problem solving

Obstacle Path Adventure	p. 13
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
Mystery Bag Team Challenge	p. 17
Pattern Detective	p. 18
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Invent a Toy 	p. 21
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
Backwards Day Mini Game	p. 29

Emotional expression & enjoyment

Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Parachute Laugh Lift 	p. 23
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Treasure Hunt for Happy Things	p. 24
Joy Jar	p. 25
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Funny Face Challenge	p. 26
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27

Attention and self-regulation

Follow the Scarf	p. 11
Balloon Balance Challenge	p. 12
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
Mirror Me	p. 14
Pattern Detective	p. 18
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Joy Jar	p. 25
Backwards Day Mini Game	p. 29



4. Activity Index by Number of Children

This index helps families choose activities according to whether they are playing with one child, siblings, or more than one child together. Many activities can be adapted flexibly. Children do not always need to do the same thing at the same time; they may take turns, share roles, lead, follow, observe, or join in at different levels.

Best for one child

Pattern Detective	p. 18
What Else Could It Be?	p. 19
Finish the Picture	p. 19
Treasure Map Maker	p. 20
Invent a Toy	p. 21
Joy Jar	p. 25

Suitable for more than one child

Animal Action Parade	p. 10
Mirror Me	p. 14
Tea Party Turn-Taking	p. 15
Build-a-Story Relay	p. 16
Mystery Bag Team Challenge	p. 17
Puppet Problem Solvers	p. 17
Bubble Burst Race	p. 22
Parachute Laugh Lift	p. 23
Giggle Freeze Dance	p. 23
Celebration Parade	p. 25
Funny Face Challenge	p. 26
Mixed-Up Animal Parade	p. 27
Nonsense Chef	p. 28
Silly Sound News Reporter	p. 29

Works with more than one child with small adjustments

Shadow Chase	p. 11
• Take turns being the shadow	
Follow the Scarf	p. 11
• Let one child lead the scarf movement while the other follows, then swap roles.	
Balloon Balance Challenge	p. 12
• Keep the balloon in the air together, or take turns trying the same challenge.	
Obstacle Path Adventure	p. 13
• Complete the path one at a time, or work together to build and change the course.	
Movement Dice Challenge	p. 13
• Take turns rolling the dice, or everyone do the movement together each turn.	
Role-Swap Helpers	p. 15
• One child lead while the other joins in with a simple role, then swap roles.	
Different Ending Story Maker	p. 21
• Each child to suggest a different ending, then compare or combine their ideas.	
Treasure Hunt for Happy Things	p. 24
• Make hats side by side, or let children help decorate each other's hats.	
Backwards Day Mini Game	p. 29
• Take turns suggesting a backwards idea, or choose one silly action for everyone to try together.	



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Part 7. Parent Reflection and Feedback

Weekly Play Planner

A Week of Playful Moments

Use this planner in a way that suits your family. You may wish to try one or two new activities, repeat a favourite, or simply note the playful moments your child most enjoyed.

Monday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Tuesday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Thursday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Wednesday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Saturday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Friday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Sunday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

My Child's Favorite Game

Monday



Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Tuesday



Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Wednesday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Thursday



Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Friday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____



Saturday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

Sunday

Type of Play: _____

Feeling: _____

Remark: _____

My Child's Favorite Game

★ Parent reflection

A few simple reflections can help families notice what their child enjoys and how play is supporting connection, confidence, and engagement over time. You may wish to use the prompts below after trying one activity, at the end of the week, or whenever it feels helpful.

1. What did my child seem to enjoy most?
2. Which activity would my child like to try again?
3. Was there anything that surprised me during play?
4. Did my child respond differently from what I expected? If so, how?
5. What seemed to help my child stay engaged?
6. Is there anything I would adapt next time?

Parent feedback

Thank you for using this guide with your child.



Your feedback is valuable and may help us understand how families use the guide in everyday life, which activities feel most useful, and how future resources can be improved. If you would like to share your experience, please scan the QR code on the right to complete a short feedback form.



To thank families for taking part, all eligible feedback responses submitted by 11:59 pm on 25 September 2026 will be entered into a prize draw. Five respondents will be selected at random, and each will receive a £10 voucher by email by 30 September 2026.

To be included in the draw, please complete the feedback form and provide a valid email address. One entry per person or household only. Please note that incomplete, duplicate, late, or invalid entries will not be included. If the email address provided is incorrect or inactive, the research team reserves the right to select another winner.

The voucher is non-transferable, no cash alternative will be offered, and it must be redeemed within one month of issue. No replacement, compensation, or alternative prize will be provided for incorrect email details, non-delivery caused by inaccurate contact information, or failure to redeem the voucher before it expires. The research team reserves the right to verify eligibility and to make final decisions on the validity of entries and administration of the prize draw.

Personal details provided for the feedback form and prize draw will be used only for administering the feedback process and contacting prize draw winners, unless respondents separately agree to another use.



Part 8. Final Words for Parents

Thank you for taking the time to explore this play guide. ❤️

Every child brings their own interests, ideas, energy, and way of joining in. Some children enjoy movement and excitement, some prefer stories and pretend play, and others take time before they feel ready to join in more fully. There is no single right way for play to look. What matters is finding moments that feel genuine, enjoyable, and right for your child and your family.

It is also worth noting that play does not need to be new all the time. Children often return to the same games, ideas, and routines because repetition helps them feel confident, capable, and ready to explore a little further. A familiar game played again with a small change, a shared joke that comes back each week, or a favourite pretend story told in a new way can all continue to hold value.

As you use this guide, trust your knowledge of your child. Notice what holds their attention, what helps them feel relaxed, what makes them laugh, and what encourages them to join in. These small observations can guide you far more meaningfully than trying to do everything at once.

We hope this guide has offered not only practical ideas, but also reassurance. Play can grow in ordinary spaces, through familiar routines, repeated favourites, and shared moments that feel simple and real. Over time, these experiences can become part of the memories, relationships, and everyday rhythms that children carry with them.

Thank you for letting play be part of your family life.





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Everyday Play, Meaningful Growth is a practical family play guide designed to support playful interaction at home for children aged 3 to 7. Drawing on research in early childhood play and playfulness, it offers simple, flexible, and enjoyable activity ideas to help families make the most of everyday moments together.

For parents, carers, and families of children aged 3 to 7.

