



# The Benefits of Play-Based Learning

[www.kidsacademy.mobi](http://www.kidsacademy.mobi)

According to statistics from the United States Census Bureau, there was a doubling of the number of households in the US homeschooling their children in the 2020-21 school year, compared to numbers from the previous year.

The US Census Bureau states that in these unfamiliar times families are 'seeking solutions that will reliably meet their health and safety needs, their childcare needs and the learning and socio-emotional needs of their children.

Parents have undoubtedly done a wonderful job and deserve recognition for their efforts. It is however worth noting, as statistics from the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) show, that the pandemic has had an impact on children's mental and emotional wellbeing and that of their parents. Figures from KFF state that over 25% of high school students listed deteriorating emotional and cognitive health during the pandemic. The study also reports more than a fifth of parents with children aged 5 to 12 felt their child's mental and emotional wellbeing had worsened over this period. You may find out more expert articles about children's wellbeing in the [parenting blog](#).

Online access to mental health services has increased and the impact of loneliness and isolation has impacted not just the children in households, but also that of their caregivers, which in turn has affected the family unit as a whole.

In spite of these statistics, it is important to remember that it is never too late to make beneficial changes inside the family home, specifically in relation to children's educational and holistic development. For those continuing to home school their little ones, or for caregivers keen to know more about ongoing ways to aid their child's holistic development it is worth exploring the benefits of play-based learning.

In this blog, we will do just that, and understand how play-based learning can be a great way to incorporate fun and family bonding time into childrens' daily educational activities.



## Firstly, What is Play-Based Learning?

As a [Play-Based Educator](#), children's counselor, and Education Studies graduate myself I understand the way in which play-based activities can foster a sense of exploration, curiosity, and, most importantly, fun into a child's learning process and positively impact their development.

Play-based learning is similar to the [Montessori method of education](#) in that it utilizes hands-on learning techniques, fosters independence, and crafts the environment in order to help the child grow in line with their needs. It is different from Montessori in the way it focuses, as the name suggests, more on play rather than the academics of education. This isn't to say that play learning doesn't aid children's academic development, instead, it just recognizes that play learning goes about it in a different, possibly less traditional, way.

As a play-based educator working with children in this way I know that this method of learning is incredibly beneficial for children in terms of helping them to meet their developmental milestones. It can be especially helpful for younger children in early education, as well as those that may struggle with structured learning.

According to UNICEF's Lego Foundation Learning Through Play publication, play is an 'essential strategy for learning' and states that 'learning through play is relevant throughout the whole early childhood period and beyond'.

The publication defines the process of play as being rooted in a child's agency and choice within the experience. It is a space in which they are able to shape their own play and use their initiative and imagination. UNICEF also recognizes play as being one of the most important ways young children can gain essential skills and knowledge. They define play through the graphic below - play is meaningful, joyful, engaging, interactive, and social.



## Benefits of Play Learning

One of the main benefits of play-based learning is that it is child-led. The educator's/ adult's role is however still very important in terms of setting up the environment to provide children with a beneficial space to explore and learn within. Play learning requires an element of flexibility and adaptability from the adult's perspective and the

capacity to go where the child's imagination takes you. It is important to not diminish or unnecessarily curtail imaginative play if the child is engaged, learning, and having fun. Our educational [app Talented and Gifted](#) can help him with game learning.

In today's society, there can be a lot of emphasis placed on academic achievement and, whilst academics are important, this focus can, unfortunately, impact a child's freedom and imagination. This fixation on exams and grades can often make people forget that children are just that, children, and what they do best is PLAY.

They are expert players and this isn't something for them to grow out of, but instead a beautiful tool for self-expression, learning how to function as a human within the world and a place for them to understand themselves more fully and the world which they are a part of.

Play-based learning is a wonderful way to aid children's holistic development and is a space to help support their personal, social and emotional, communication and language, physical, literacy and maths milestones. It is also a great tool to allow them to understand the world and express themselves.



As learning through play is less rigorous and structured than traditional academic learning techniques there is greater freedom for children to follow their own passions and interests. There isn't a one size fits all approach and it isn't about a graded outcome. It is about learning, having fun, exploring and seeing where it takes you, which in my eyes is representative of life itself. With play learning - the sky's the limit and the child is at the helm, with a simple steadying hand from yourself.

In my own personal experience, I create a play-based learning environment by incorporating yoga, imaginative play, dance, movement, storytelling and music into sessions to help youngsters develop and have fun. It's been really beautiful for me to watch the children I work with develop and thrive. I have seen little one's confidence, balance, coordination, and strength improve. I have worked with children healing from serious injuries who come through the other side and emerge with their spirit and enthusiasm intact. It's beautiful to see.

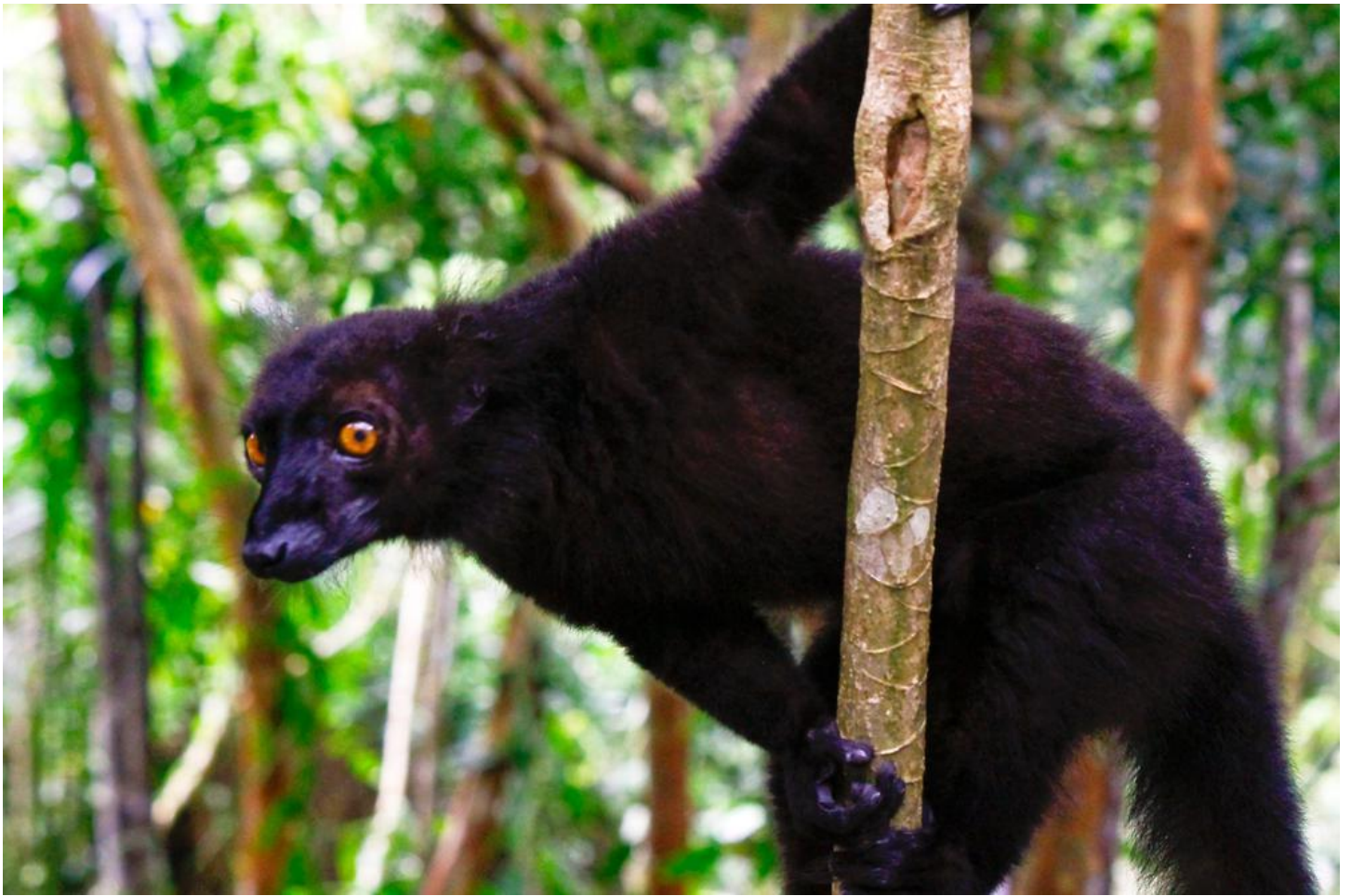
## Techniques

The freedom and reduced structure that is inherent in play learning could seem a little nerve-racking for adults to facilitate. However, as parents and caregivers you are probably already supporting play learning without even realizing it.

Children are inherently curious and imaginative - they ask questions and want to understand the world around them as they go about their lives. Play learning fosters these traits by creating a dedicated environment for curiosity by allowing children to explore in more depth, instead of just doing it out and about in daily life.

Themed creative play sessions are always a great way to establish a play learning environment. You can theme sessions by season and explore summer, fall, winter, and spring in your play activities. For example, start off your session with a fun arts and craft activity that tells your youngster more about the beauty of pollination - as they color in, craft, stick and make, ask them questions about the topic. What is pollination? What animals can they name who do this? What do the animals look like? Where do they live?

Ask them about the movements of the animals they name - what does it feel like to move in the way a lemur (a pollinator we may not always think of first) does? Have fun with it, explore the theme and go wherever the child takes you. There is no limit to this. The aim is fun and exploration.



Making education and learning interactive, active, and engaging in this way makes a beautiful change from sitting at the table doing [worksheets](#). It will come as a welcome change for both you and your child, especially if you have got stuck in a more rigid academic homeschooling structure. Taking an hour to cut, stick, talk, move and have fun - it will rejuvenate all involved.

## Reflections

In order to ensure the continued development of your child and support their general wellbeing at this time incorporating fun, play-based activities into their day-to-day learning is a great choice.

I believe that what you focus on grows, and so when working with children it is important to pay attention to the things that are going to help them thrive. Be a part of what they are excited about, praise their strengths and encourage them when they encounter challenges, foster their independence, and most importantly have fun with it. Building children up through play-based learning is a special thing and I wish you luck as you enjoy the benefits of play with your child. It will bring a smile to the faces of all involved.

Thank you for reading and have a lovely day.

# About the author

Alison Carter - Play-Based Educator, ESL Teacher, Trauma Sensitive Yoga and Pilates Teacher.

Manchester, England, UK.

## Links and references

1. <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2018-12/UNICEF-Lego-Foundation-Learning-through-Play.pdf>
2. <https://returningtoyouyoga.com/play-based-yoga-and-self-awareness-groups-for-children/>
3. <https://returningtoyouyoga.com/about/>

