

Playing with Kids: How to Make It Fun and Constructive for All?

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Generations ago, parents didn't play with their children much. Think back to your own childhood, or descriptions that your parents told you about theirs, and you'll likely learn that much of the time, kids from years gone by spent a lot of time playing outside.

Just look around on the internet, and you'll find articles upon articles about the decline of outdoor play and even a catchy new phrase for the practice today: "free range play". Though free range play was the norm for generations past, we now know that parent-child play is important for many reasons. But while some parents love playing with their children, others admittedly aren't thrilled with the idea because of the repetition and frustration that's sometimes involved.



Playing with Kids: A Duty of Privilege?

All parents are likely to have their own varying opinions on the topic. For one, some families may see it as their duty to play with kids because of the lack of similar-aged kids

nearby for their own children to play with. Yet other parents may lack the time or resources to play with their kids due to their working obligations, or financial strain.

Regardless, playing with kids should never be just a duty; after all, the purpose of play is to have fun! And since kids learn through play, it also serves the purpose of teaching kids about their world and beliefs. You can look at playing with kids as an early learning program of sorts. Play not only passes the time, but teaches important life lessons.

So if your kids do not have many opportunities to play with other kids, it's important to play with them to ensure that they're learning, growing, and having fun. But if you're one of the many parents that don't particularly enjoy playing with kids, how can you make it fun for everyone, including yourself?

The Balancing Act of Proper Play

One of the reasons parents don't like to play with their kids is because kids like to play or practice a skill on repeat. Your child might want to play catch, or ride their bikes, but it's all they want to do for a week straight! Your child might want to play the same board game, over and over again. Your child might want to demand what to play, and how to play it, every time.

On the other hand, perhaps your child is making something complex using Legos, or building something in sand. Oftentimes parents become frustrated because the child gets frustrated, and the parent takes over completely, leaving the child out. Consequently, kids don't learn when parents do the hard work for them.

"As a parent, don't dominate or let your child take over play completely."

These situations are understandable. We want to enjoy playing with kids and [promote good behavior](#), while on the other hand minimize frustration to complete a game or activity. This is why playing with kids is a delicate balancing act.

- Give your child choices.
- Don't let kids take over play completely.
- Guide your children in their play, but don't take over for them.

Fun Things to Try with Your Kids

Playing with kids can involve anything from giving piggy-back rides, to playing "I Spy" with your kids while waiting for an appointment. If you're looking for enjoyable games to play with little kids, try the following:



- Physical rough and tumble activities

Many of these activities are fun, and don't involve lengthy games. Playing rough with your kids can involve piggy-back rides, "horsey rides" on your lap, tag, and hide and seek! These are quick games that your kids can play with other kids, after they learn them from you! If you're a parent that doesn't always enjoy playing with your kids, think of a few quick rough and tumble games you enjoy and use these for short bursts of play. You and your child will get some great bonding time, while playing in a physical way that kids love!

- Family board and card games

Family games are great because they offer a good, structured, way to play with kids. Kids work on learning rules and taking turns through gameplay, and everyone has fun in the process! Plus, with so many different types of games available, you can always keep it fresh and exciting by playing a variety of games and minimizing repetition.

- Outdoor sports

Playing catch, or teaching your child to shoot a ball through a basketball hoop is an awesome way to bond with your child while he or she learns the rules of the game. Find the nearest ball park or court, readily available in most neighborhoods and get out there! Your child will love [spending quality time outdoors](#) while they learn to play!

Playing with your kids should be joyful, not a job. If you find yourself not enjoying it, just find new ways to do it, by working in variety, and structure. Be careful to give your kids boundaries, while avoiding dominating the activity. Following the above tips, there's no doubt you'll find a way to make your children's play memorable and fun for all!

