

Fun with Children

A 4-H Child Development Project

There are many ways to have fun with younger boys and girls. "Fun with Children" is planned to be an adventure with children who have not yet started school. It is also planned to help you learn some play activities that will be useful when you are old enough to take care of children, to be a sitter. A sitter who understands children and knows how to play with them is loved by both parents and children.

"Fun with Children" is divided into four parts: Stories and Make-Belive Activities, Art & Music Activities, Toys and Play Activities, and Nature and Animal Activities. These activities do not have to be done in any particular order. You may plan to work in this project in different ways.

You may:

- Do only one part each year.
- Do one, two, three, or all four parts in a year.
- Enroll in a Child Development Club.
- Work on some of the activities by yourself or with other club members.

Your leader will help you make plans for working on the project and help you decide on the activities to include in each part.



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Children's Play

Children spend much of their time in play. Play is not only fun, but is an important kind of work for children. It is so important that sometimes they prefer play to eating or sleeping. It's the way all children learn skills that they need to handle other, bigger tasks in life.

Creativity is developed when children play. They use their imaginations, intelligence and bodies to do interesting things. They learn to solve problems, learn about the world around them, and how to get along with others. You can increase your own creativity when you provide activities and encouragement for children. The toys you select or activities you share in "Fun with Children" will help children grow in a variety of ways.

PLAY AIDS DEVELOPMENT

When children learn to walk, they want to pull things across the room. They are building strong leg muscles. They take a puzzle apart and put it back together again. In doing this they are learning to use their fingers. They want to handle the ice in their glass or taste the soap. They want to find out how things taste and feel.

While playing they learn that some toys are heavier than others, that a ball bounces and boats float. They learn the names of colors and that some things will hurt them. They learn to imitate what others do and how sharing works.

PLAY BUILDS A CHILD'S MIND

Children like to think hard about what they are doing. They can solve the problem of building blocks so they will stand high. Finding the pieces of the puzzle that belong in certain places and dressing and undressing a doll are enjoyable problem-solving activities. Play helps minds and bodies work together to finish a task.

PLAY HELPS CHILDREN MAKE DECISIONS

Children's creative imagination is used when they make things from materials on hand. A child can decide what to do with blocks, sand, water, boxes, paints, crayons, paste, paper, rhythm instruments, or kits of supplies for playing store, or costumes for dress-up. The real fun of playing comes from doing something with things. Simply watching others do things or watching a mechanical toy does not provide the child with creative enjoyment.

PLAY EASES TENSION

Play helps children gain satisfaction as they learn to control their actions and bodies. They are happy when they learn to like the beauty of colors, the rhythm of a melody, or the action of games. Playing with dolls, stuffed animals, or carpenter tools may also help them express anger or hurt. In play they often work out feelings they dare not show in everyday living.

PLAY FORMS GOOD HABITS

You can help children form good habits. When you play with children they need freedom to express their originality. Since they will imitate many things you do, you can show how to share things and how to respect other people's possessions. This also means that no one else uses their playthings without their permission. Habits of orderliness will grow out of having a place for the toys and putting them away when playtime is finished.

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