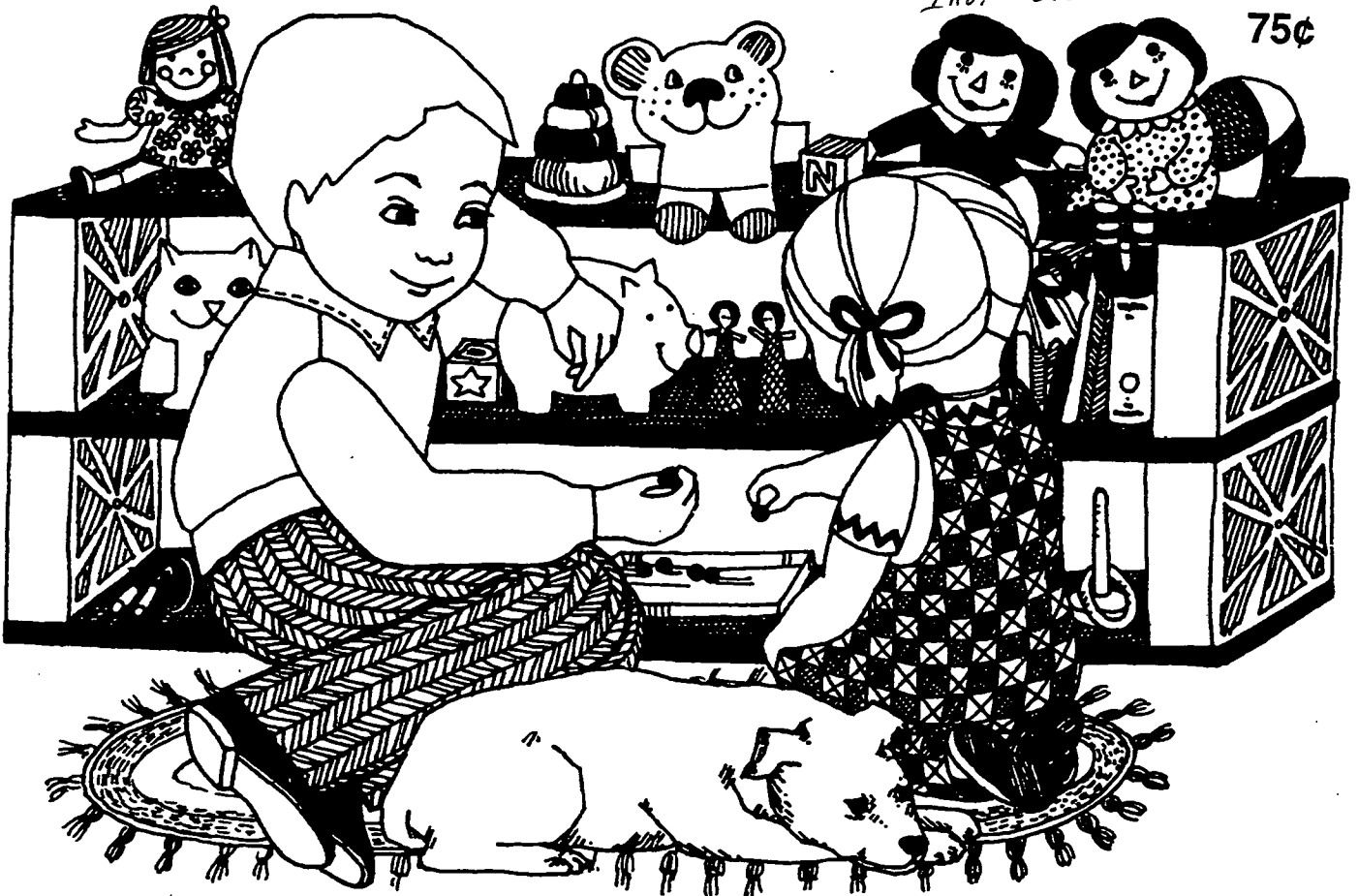


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Toy and Play Activities

What can you do for *Fun With Children Through Toys and Play Activities*? Here are some ideas:

1. Choose a fun-friend (see 4-H 911).
2. Play with a pre-school child three times for at least half an hour each time.
3. Make three toys and observe how a child plays with each.
4. Make a dress-up wardrobe for your fun-friend.
5. Look at three different toys in a store and evaluate one of them.
6. Look at the storage of a child's toys and help improve it.
7. Find ways to keep children safe and help make others concerned about children's safety.
8. Repair toys for a children's group.
9. Visit with your fun-friend's parent about what you have been teaching your friend.

After completing each activity you choose to do, write a very short story about the things you and your fun-friend have done. These stories will be your record of your 4-H project.

Play

Play is important to a child. Play is the way a child practices for living and growing up. Through play, children use their bodies and grow strong. Play helps children explore their feelings. Play helps children learn.

Have you ever thought of all the things children learn from the moment they are born until they are six years old? They learn to sit up, to walk, to run, and to climb. They learn to talk, learn all kinds of things about people and the world in which they live. How does play help them to learn these things?

A child's play changes with growth. At first, children play with their fingers and with their toes. Later they play with toys. They feel them, taste them, and use them in many different ways. They even learn by dropping them! Did you know that a baby doesn't automatically know how to let go of things? But once it is learned, they drop everything. It keeps someone busy picking up after them. Once they have learned to drop things and have worked at it awhile, they are ready to hang on to things again.

Toys are a child's tools for learning about the world. They use toys in many different ways. Children of different ages need different toys. Can you think of any one toy that both a one-year-old and a six-year-old would be able to use? Would the six-year-old use it in the same way that the one-year-old does?

Playing "make-believe" is one way children play and learn. Through make-believe or dramatic play, children try out the everyday activities they see around them. They play house, train, cowboy, or store. They pretend to be mothers and daddys, doctors, nurses, carpenters, firemen-- or dogs, kittens, and horses. They pretend to be most any person or animal with whom they've had experience.

Playing With A Child

Choose a child between 18 months and 6 years of age you can play with three times. Plan at least a half hour each time.

You may play with a younger brother or sister, but it may be more interesting to play with someone outside your own family. Each child is different, and you may enjoy seeing how a child of another age and from another family plays.

As you play with a child, do the things that they are doing. Part of your activity may be just sitting and watching. Instead of suggesting games to be played, watch and learn how the child plays.

What toys were played with, and how were they used? Was the play make-believe? Was it with an animal? Another child? Alone?

Making Toys

Toys are very important for a child's growth and development. They do not need to be expensive "store-bought" ones. Children like homemade toys just as well.

In fact, a young child often prefers pots and pans to any toys you can purchase. At first, children may make noise with the pans or stack and unstack them. Then they try to use them as a parent does--"cooking" in them. The changing uses show growth and development.

A child's interest in toys changes with growth and development. This is because the mind as well as the body is used in play. A suitable variety of toys helps a child to use muscles, to learn to play with others, and to develop imagination, initiative, and a sense of responsibility.

Making Toys

Select a child for whom you will make toys. Choose one to three children between nine months and six years of age. Make at least three toys. Make three different toys for one child or one toy for each of three children.

Ideas for making toys can be found in books and magazines. The library may have some books or magazines which give directions for making toys. Your county Extension agent may have some bulletins which can help you.

You might get other ideas from your club leader or from toys someone else has made. If you've made paper-mache toys at school, you may want to make one for your friend. If you know how to sew, you can stitch a toy.

Observing Play With Toys

After you've made your toys, give them to the child or children you've made them for. Observe the child or children playing with the toys.

How did the child use the toy in play? Did the child use the toy in the way you thought it would be used?

Making a Dress-up Wardrobe

In their make-believe play, children often play house, acting out and talking about home experiences. Dressing up, taking care of a baby, cooking, eating, entertaining, and going to the store are some of the make-believe activities that children especially enjoy.

This type of play is helped along with very simple materials. A child enjoys having a few props for playing dress-up. A little girl will become a grown-up lady in her own eyes with the aid of a pair of old high heeled shoes, a scarf, and a handbag. And a little boy will become a grown-up with a man's hat and necktie to play with. Nearly all children like to play dress-up.

Making A Dress-up Wardrobe

To make a dress-up wardrobe, you'll need to collect some articles of clothing and accessories. You'll want to include some of the following things, plus any others that you think would please children:

Dress. Take a tuck in the shoulders of an old dress so it will fit a small child.

Apron. A worn or faded apron will delight a small child. Cut it down to size or make a new one.

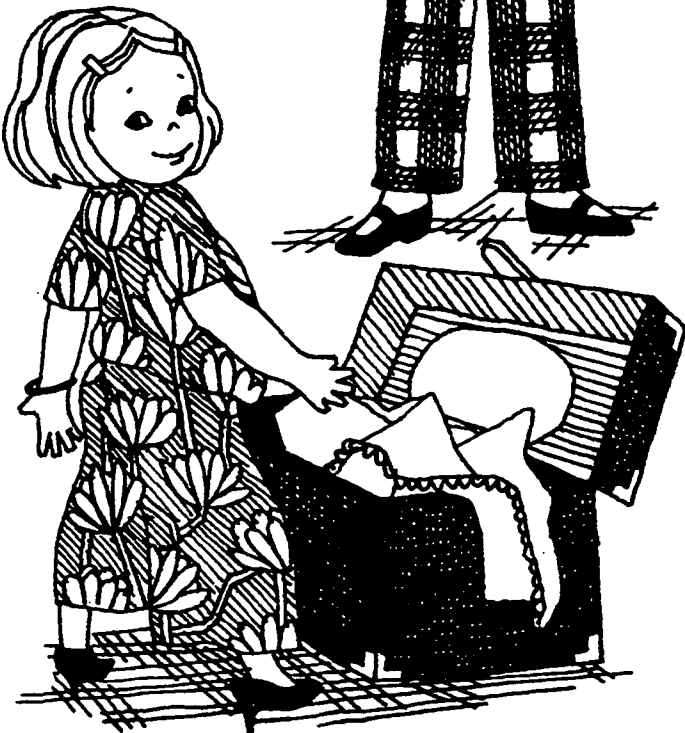
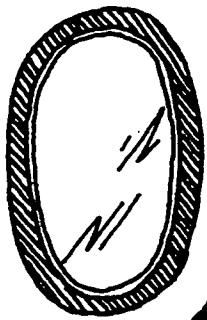
Cape. A cape is fun to wear around the shoulders. You can make one from a discarded dress. Fix it so it will tie around the neck.

Twirling skirt. A full skirt with elastic around the waist makes a skirt which will flare out when a child twirls.

Hat. Veils, flowers, and feathers can be added to make a real creation.

Gloves. If your mother has some gloves which don't match, they can be dyed to make a "matched" pair. Or, cut off the worn finger tips of a pair of gloves and sew them to make shorter fingers.

Other accessories. An old purse or two, a pair of high heeled shoes, scarves, some beads, earrings, and other jewelry will add zest to the wardrobe.



Boys enjoy playing dress-up too. Collect some men's hats in a variety of different styles, old neckties, boots, and billfolds. You can make an older boy's jacket smaller. Make a fireman's jacket, a mechanic's coveralls, a doctor's coat, a pair of cowboy chaps, or any type of clothing that appeals to the interests of boys. Girls may also like to try some of these clothes.

Your friends will enjoy the wardrobe even more if they know where to find it when they want it. You can fix a suitable storage container for the clothes. A large suit box, hat box, or similar cardboard box covered with wallpaper would make a satisfactory container. Be sure the box is sturdy and is one that the child can open and close without help.

Give the dress-up wardrobe to your fun-friend. Explain that it is for them to keep. It may not be played with when you are around, but ask their parents if it is used.

Evaluating Toys

Most children today have many toys. There are many kinds of toys and games on the market and many more are being developed all the time. Some toys are better choices for children than others. What makes a toy a good choice?

The first thing to consider when choosing a toy is the child. How old is he or she? What kinds of activities does he or she especially enjoy? What other toys do they have?

Judge the toy by asking these questions:

- Is it suitable for the child's age?
- Is it durable?
- Is it safe?
- Can it be cleaned?
- Is it attractive?
- Can it be used in different ways?
- Can the child use it alone or would a grown-up be needed to help?
- Could it be used over a period of time?
- What would it teach the child?
- Is it a good value for its price?

Here are some reference materials to help you learn more about the selection of

toys. These materials are available without cost to you. Your or your leader can order them directly from the company. You should read one of them before evaluating the toys.

Choosing Toys for Children of All Ages, American Toy Institute, 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10010

Children and Toys, available from the Extension office in your county.

Selecting and Evaluating Toys

The first thing you need to do for this activity is to decide for whom you want to select a toy. Remember, you won't actually be buying the toy for the child. Your job is to evaluate the toy to see whether or not it is a good choice for that particular child.

Then go to a store and look at the toys available. Choose three different toys you think would be suitable for the child you have in mind. Evaluate one of the toys by asking the questions discussed earlier.

If it would be too difficult or inconvenient for you to visit a store to evaluate toys, there are other ways you could do this. You might borrow three toys from a neighbor and evaluate each of them. Or, you might plan with your leader and other club members for each member to bring a toy to display at a club meeting. Then each member could examine the toys, select three which would be suitable for their fun-friend, and evaluate them.

Improving Toy Storage

Keeping toys in some kind of reasonable order may seem an unnecessary chore, but it is important to a child's play. Just having toys is not enough. Toys need to be arranged and stored in a way that will help a child use them safely and creatively. Also, a child will have more fun when toys are conveniently arranged and stored.

Observing Toy Storage

Ask permission of a child's parent to look at the place the children's toys are kept. Also watch the child using the toys. As you observe, ask yourself the following questions:

Where are the playthings kept?
Is it easy to find what is wanted?
Do a lot of things have to be taken
out to find the one toy needed?
Are the toys stored near the play area?
Is it easy to put things away?
Are some toys stored away for play at
another time?
Are the toys in good repair?
What could be done to improve the storage?

Improving The Storage

Talk with the child's parent and see if you could help to improve toy storage. What would you suggest? What could you do to help? Perhaps the child's parent will have some ideas.

How should toys be stored for their best use by a child? Usually shelves are better for storage than a basket or a large box. Simple shelves can be made from apple boxes or pieces of lumber and large bricks.

You'll be able to find heavy cardboard boxes in almost any size to store those things that won't fit on the shelves. You can use pictures cut from a toy catalog or from magazines to label the boxes. This will make it easier to find toys and it will help in learning where to put toys away.

Small toys can be placed in small boxes. Show boxes and tin cans make good storage containers for small things. Only one type of toy in a box is a good rule.

Your county Extension agent may know where to get bulletins which will give you more ideas for improving storage of toys.

Keeping Children Safe

Knowing about child safety is important for every person who is responsible for children. Did you know that accidents are the cause of most of the deaths of children under one year of age? Young children do not have judgment, so the responsibility for their protection rests with those who are older. Parents and other people must work to prevent injury and death from accidents.

Would you like to help make life safer for some child? Perhaps you can by learning more about accidents and how to

avoid them. You can help parents by pointing out some of the dangers children face. You can become more watchful of small children.

Finding Ways To Keep Children Safe

The following activities are some things you can do to find ways to keep children safe. You may do as many of them as you like. Can you think of others?

Pamphlets about children's safety are available at your county health office. Pamphlets on children's safety are available from the National Safety Council, 425 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60601. You may want to get and read some of these materials to help you find ways to keep children safe.

Invite your county health officer or a member of the staff to talk to your club. Or, arrange to have a few of your club members interview them. Find out what are the most common causes of accidents of children in your area. What do they suggest to prevent these accidents?

Make a check list of household hazards to children's safety. Check your home to make sure it's safe for young children in your family or for young children who may visit in your home. Work with your parents to remove hazards you find.

Helping Make Others Concerned About Children's Safety

The following activities are some things you can do to help make others concerned about children's safety. You may do as many of them as you like. Can you think of others?

Talk to the editor or reporter of your local newspaper about what you have learned about children's safety. Point out any danger spots in your community. Report what you and other club members are doing and have done to help make others concerned about children's safety.

Prepare a display on the most common causes of accidents to children in your area. Show ways they could be prevented. Put the display in a place where it will be seen by parents of young children.

Make copies of your check list of household hazards. Give them to parents of young children who would be interested in making their home safer for children.

Repairing Toys

Toys and play equipment should be inspected regularly. They should be kept clean and in good working order. Toys which are in good repair are safer and more fun for children.

You and your club can be helpful to others by repairing toys. A Sunday school

or a kindergarten may want your help. Or, you may want to prepare toys to send to a children's institution. If some service club in your community has a toy repair project, you may want to work with them.

Make plans with your club to repair toys for a children's group. You may work by yourself or with other club members. Your leader can help you plan ways to learn more about how to repair toys. You may want to work with a woodworking club or another 4-H club and develop a joint project.

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