

PUPPET MAKING

Puppet making supports children's **fine motor** and **cognitive** development. Fine motor play helps children build strength and control in their hands and fingers, crucial for everyday tasks like drawing, dressing and feeding themselves. cognitive play includes problem-solving, imaginative and creative thinking skills essential for future learning.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Builds hand and finger strength
- Supports creativity and planning
- Encourages concentration and resilience
- Develops problem-solving and early literacy skills

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Finger painting
- Sticker collages
- Bead threading

TO SUPPORT COGNITIVE SKILLS:

- Shape sorting boxes
- Colour-matching games
- Simple puzzles



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PUPPET PLAY

Puppet play supports **social**, **emotional** and **language** development. Socio-dramatic play allows children to act out imaginary scenarios, experiences and feelings, helping children build empathy and to make sense of the world around them. It encourages language development through communication and storytelling too.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Encourages creativity and imagination
- Supports safe experimentation and emotional expression
- Builds language and communication
- Develops empathy and perspective-taking

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT SOCIAL SKILLS:

- Peek-a-boo
- Turn-taking ball games
- Role-play

TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL SKILLS:

- Share picture books showing different emotions
- Using puppets to name and express feelings

TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE SKILLS:

- Nursery rhymes with actions
- Storytelling



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GROUP DANCING

Dancing supports **physical** (gross motor), **cognitive** and **social-emotional** development. It helps children build strength, coordination, flexibility, spatial and body awareness, and connection to culture. Connecting movement to music supports creative expression, brain and muscle connectivity, and mathematical pattern concepts.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS MORE PLAY IDEAS

- Develops strength, balance and coordination
- Encourages self-expression and rhythm
- Supports confidence and body awareness
- Enhances social skills through group movement

TO SUPPORT GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:

- Animal movement games (e.g., hopping like a frog)
- Dancing with props like scarves, mini beanbags, or hats

TO SUPPORT SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS:

- Storytelling through movement
- Listen to classical music, express emotions through dance



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This activity has kindly been
put on by Kindy Dance Time



CONSTRUCTION BLOCK PLAY

Playing with large construction blocks supports **cognitive** and **physical** development. Through activities like building and stacking, children develop fine motor skills, spatial reasoning, problem-solving abilities, and creativity. It also strengthens their muscles and coordination as they lift, stack and balance the blocks. You can extend block play by adding figurines, small vehicles, fabric, and found materials like shells, leaves and gumnuts, encouraging children to create imaginative scenes.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Builds problem-solving and planning skills
- Encourages spatial awareness
- Strengthens large muscle coordination
- Promotes teamwork and communication when with play partners



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MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT COGNITIVE SKILLS:

- Sorting and stacking items
- Shape sorting toys
- Building with smaller bricks

TO SUPPORT PHYSICAL SKILLS:

- Seated ball games (rolling/catching)
- Animal walks (bear crawl, crab walk)

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JOHNSON'S STAGES OF BLOCK PLAY



(STAGE 1)

Carrying & Exploring

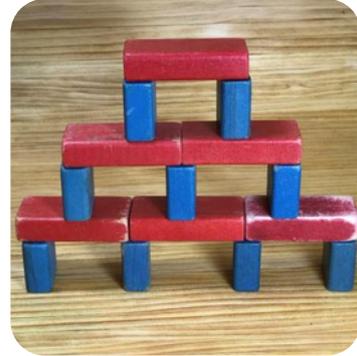
Children haul, dump, manipulate, and generally explore blocks while not using them for construction.



(STAGE 2)

Forming Rows & Stacks

Children create vertical stacks or horizontal rows of blocks.



(STAGE 3)

Bridging Space

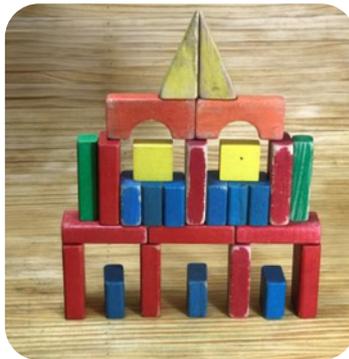
Children space a pair of blocks and span them with a third block to create a bridge.



(STAGE 4)

Creating Enclosures

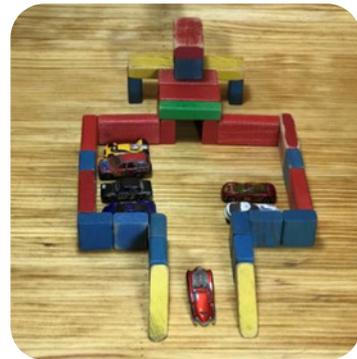
Children purposefully arrange blocks to enclose space.



(STAGE 5)

Balanced, Decorative Patterns

Children create balanced and usually very symmetrical structures.



(STAGE 6)

Naming Structures

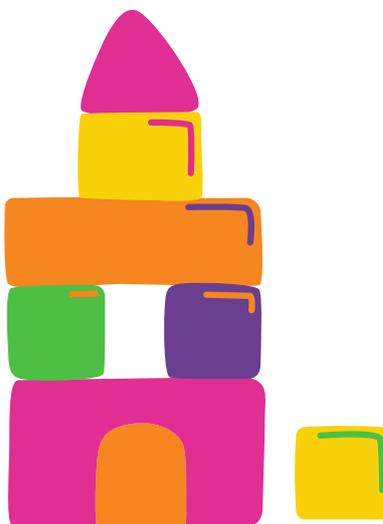
Children incorporate previous techniques and begin naming structures during or after construction.



(STAGE 7)

Building Representations

Children name structures before building and use structures for dramatic play.



Based on the work of researcher, author, and preschool pioneer Harriet Merrill Johnson in her book *The Art Of Block Building*

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BABY SOFT PLAY

THIS ZONE IS FOR BABIES WHO ARE
NOT YET WALKING

Soft play for crawlers supports early **gross motor** (physical) and **sensory** development. It encourages babies to move their bodies, explore new surfaces and build strength for crawling, pulling up and balancing. This type of play helps babies develop spatial awareness and confidence in movement.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Develops crawling, reaching and balancing
- Encourages independence and confidence
- Supports sensory exploration
- Builds coordination and core strength

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:

- Tummy time on mats with toys just out of reach
- Crawling through tunnels or under soft arches

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Crinkle and rattle toys
- Tummy time mirror
- Peek a boo and covering / uncovering items under fabric



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Soft play equipment is from
Little People Play

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BABY SOFT PLAY

THIS ZONE IS FOR BABIES WHO ARE WALKING OR NEARLY WALKING

Soft play for early walkers supports toddler's **gross motor (physical)** development such as balance and strength. Gross motor play supports walking, climbing and coordination. It gives toddlers the chance to explore their abilities in a safe and engaging way, which is important for physical development, confidence and independence.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Develops balance, strength and spatial awareness
- Supports safe risk-taking and body control
- Encourages exploration and independence
- Builds resilience through trial and error

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:

- Push-and-pull toys
- Soft climbing cubes or mini slides
- Stacking wood or foam blocks

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Finger or foot painting
- Balancing or swinging



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RIBBON RINGS

Rings & ribbon baby toys support early **sensory** exploration, **visual discrimination** and **eye tracking** development. Watching the ribbons helps babies learn to follow movement with their eyes, building focus and future early reading skills. The variety of colours and movement also helps develop visual discrimination – the ability to notice differences between shapes, colours and patterns. Reaching and grabbing builds hand-eye coordination and curiosity.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Builds visual tracking and attention
- Supports hand-eye coordination
- Encourages curiosity through colour and movement
- Develops visual discrimination

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Scarves for grabbing or brushing softly on baby
- Soft fabric squares with different textures

TO SUPPORT VISUAL SKILLS:

- Watching bubbles
- Tracking moving balls rolled gently



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PLAYDOUGH

Playdough supports **fine motor**, **sensory** and **cognitive** development. Squishing, rolling and shaping strengthens hand and finger muscles, building the coordination needed for writing. It also offers a calming sensory experience, encourages creativity and imagination, and supports social interaction and problem-solving through open-ended play.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Strengthens hands and fingers
- Encourages creativity and imagination
- Provides calming sensory input

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Using safety scissors to cut paper shapes
- Threading large beads

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Finger painting
- Kinetic sand or rice play

TO SUPPORT COGNITIVE SKILLS:

- Sorting coloured pom-poms or buttons
- Matching games or puzzles



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RICE PLAY

Rice play supports **sensory**, **fine motor** and early **cognitive** development. Children practise hand-eye coordination and control as they scoop, pour and sift. Sensory experiences like this help children feel calm and focused, and can also introduce early concepts like sorting and measuring.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Develops hand strength and coordination
- Encourages curiosity and exploration
- Supports early math skills like counting and sorting

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Finger painting
- Sensory playdough

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Scooping and pouring with cups and spoons
- Threading large beads

TO SUPPORT COGNITIVE SKILLS:

- Water play with cups/funnels
- Sorting objects by category or colour



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KINETIC SAND

Kinetic sand supports **fine motor** and **sensory** development. Moulding and shaping the sand helps strengthen little hands. It encourages creative thinking, problem-solving, and emotional regulation.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Builds hand and finger strength
- Encourages creativity and focus
- Provides calming tactile experience

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Scooping and filling moulds
- Drawing shapes in the sand
- Using small tools like rakes or shovels

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Finger painting
- Water play with cups and funnels
- Messy play such as ooblec, slime or kinetic sand



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PRETEND PLAY

Pretend play supports children's **social**, **emotional** and **language** development. By acting out real or imagined scenarios, children learn to express their feelings, develop empathy, understand others, and build vocabulary. This type of play also helps them explore problem-solving and creative thinking.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Develops understanding of other perspectives and roles
- Develops understanding of emotions and cooperation
- Helps test out developing ideas about their world

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT SOCIAL SKILLS:

- Tea parties or playing shops
- Puppet play

TO SUPPORT EMOTIONAL SKILLS:

- Acting out different feelings with dolls or puppets
- Emotion charades

TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE SKILLS:

- Simple picture books with repetition
- Singing action songs
- Rhyming games



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SMALL WORLD PLAY

Small world play supports early **language** and **fine motor** development. Creating and playing in miniature scenes encourages storytelling, builds vocabulary and allows children to explore their creativity and imagination. Moving small figures also strengthens hand control and focus.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Develops hand coordination
- Encourages vocabulary and storytelling
- Supports imaginative thinking

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT LANGUAGE SKILLS:

- Simple picture books with repetition
- Singing action songs
- Pretend play with other children

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Using small tongs to pick up pom poms
- Threading large beads



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GYMNASTICS

Gymnastics supports **gross motor** (physical) development, spatial awareness, coordination and body confidence. Gross motor play like climbing, rolling and balancing helps children build strength, spatial awareness and movement planning. It also encourages children to explore their physical abilities in a fun, active way.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Builds strength, balance and coordination
- Develops body awareness and spatial skills
- Encourages problem-solving and confidence

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT GROSS MOTOR SKILLS:

- Tummy-time with a rolling ball
- Seated ball games (rolling)
- Dancing

TO SUPPORT COGNITIVE SKILLS:

- Stacking blocks
- Stacking/nesting cups



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This activity has kindly been
put on by Gymnastics WA

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SENSORY PLAY

Children 0-2 learn through their senses first. Sensory play supports **cognitive**, **fine motor**, **emotional** and **social** development. Exploring textures can help children build sensory processing skills and learn to regulate emotions. Sensory experiences support fine motor control, problem-solving and spatial awareness. Sensory play in a group setting develops communication, social connection and curiosity. Sensory experiences build the foundation for all other learning.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Builds sensory processing skills
- Supports emotional regulation and calm
- Encourages problem-solving and curiosity
- Develops communication and social skills
- Strengthens fine motor and spatial awareness

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT COGNITIVE SKILLS:

- Peek-a-boo
- Large wooden puzzles

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Sensory playdough
- Picking up objects with small tongs

TO SUPPORT SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS:

- Calm-down bottles
- Communication boards



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SENSORY BAG CRAFT

Sensory craft bags support **fine motor** and **sensory** development in a calming way. Squeezing, pressing and exploring textures helps children develop hand strength and coordination, while also providing a gentle, contained sensory experience that supports focus and self-regulation.

ACTIVITY BENEFITS

- Provides soothing tactile experiences
- Builds hand and finger muscles
- Encourages creativity and focus
- Supports emotional regulation

MORE PLAY IDEAS

TO SUPPORT FINE MOTOR SKILLS:

- Squeezing and playing with playdough
- Picking up pom poms with small tongs

TO SUPPORT SENSORY SKILLS:

- Fabric play
- Bouncing, swinging, spinning
- Cooking or gardening



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