



Comfort Play & Teach:

A Positive Approach to Parenting™

Every Day

Encouraging Your Child to Learn Through Play

During the first five years, your child is growing quickly and developing many new skills. As his first play partner, you can support and encourage your child as he makes sense of the world through play and active exploration. Here are some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** ideas for playing and learning with your child every day.



Comfort

If you do this:

- Help your child learn to control his emotions, behaviours and thoughts as you play together
- Talk to your child each day (e.g., comment on how she plays or ask her questions)

Your child will:

- Understand how to cope with different feelings so that he can play successfully with others
- Learn new words and develop conversational skills as she enjoys receiving your special attention



Play

If you do this:

- Invite your child's friends over to enjoy dramatic play activities like "grocery store" or "going to school"
- Encourage your child to draw, paint, shape playdough, dance, sing songs and do fingerplays

Your child will:

- Learn to get along with others through talking, choosing roles and creating rules as they play
- Express her ideas in creative ways and practice using physical and language skills



Teach

If you do this:

- Explore math together at home by sorting, counting, measuring and naming shapes
- Make reading books a special activity that you enjoy together every day, at bedtime or during playtime

Your child will:

- Become familiar and comfortable with math concepts and find out how people use them each day
- Learn about the alphabet, letter sounds and words, and participate in telling stories



For more information visit www.investinkids.ca

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Ten Ways to Encourage Your Child to Learn Through Play

1. Involve your child in creating his own presents, greeting cards and gift wrap. This is a lovely chance for him to explore different art techniques like papier mâché, collage, painting and printing, sculpting with playdough and to discover the enjoyment that comes with making something for another person.
2. Create a special storage box for dramatic play materials. Include things like hats, gloves, aprons, jewellery, cooking tools like a plastic bowl and wooden spoons, dolls, stuffed animals. This will encourage your child to role-play things she sees you doing and practice many important self-help skills as well.
3. Provide board books for your child to read to his teddy bears and dolls. He will imitate reading behaviours he has observed, and practice emerging literacy skills like turning pages, telling stories about what is in the pictures and recognizing letters and words.
4. Demonstrate different uses of numbers for your child. Do simple household arithmetic using a calculator. Measure a window space for new curtains. Weigh ingredients on a kitchen scale. Cross off the days on a calendar. Use a timer when cooking. She will see the different ways people use numbers.
5. Listen to different styles of music at home (e.g., classical, rock, choral, baroque, country, jazz, opera, folk and music from different cultures). Your child can dance, pat the beat on his lap, play along using instruments made from beautiful junk or even try to sing the words. This will build his appreciation of music.



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6. Walk in the neighbourhood with your child or bring a ball to the park and play soccer or catch. Encourage your child to explore the climbing equipment, climbing the ladder or sliding down the pole. These are great ways to get some fresh air, to burn off a little bit of energy and to just enjoy each other's company.
7. Plant a garden or provide indoor planting experiences like creating a terrarium or sprouting seeds. Gardening invites children into the world of fruits, vegetables, herbs, flowers and even weeds! Gardening lets children learn with their senses – touching soil, smelling flowers, seeing colours or tasting scarlet runner beans.
8. Look at magazines and catalogues with your child. Ask her to cut out pictures of words that begin with different letters of the alphabet and glue these onto paper to create her own alphabet book. This will give her the opportunity to recognize the sound that each letter in the alphabet makes and to build her vocabulary.
9. Teach familiar songs and nursery rhymes to your child that include numbers. *One, Two Buckle My Shoe, The Ants Go Marching One by One* and *This Old Man* are fun songs that will help him learn to count to ten. He will want to sing these familiar songs again and again.
10. Cook with your child. Bake bread, brew tea, freeze popsicles and shake cream into butter. These are all ways to help your child learn about the different foods people eat and how they are prepared, as well as concepts like “change of state,” “hot and cold,” and “liquid and solid.” When children cook, they observe, compare and problem-solve.



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Comfort, Play & Teach™ Checklist: Ways We Learn Through Play at Home

Comfort

- My child and I cuddle up and read books together. It is a special time for us to bond, to read the words and to make up stories about the pictures.
- I praise my child's efforts to count household objects like toys and shoes, and I show her how proud I am that she knows some numbers.
- My child tells me stories about his pictures and I write these down so he begins to understand the relationship between spoken and written words.

Play

- My child and I play *I Spy* games, looking for different words we see around us (e.g., on street signs, shopping bags, posters and cereal boxes).
- I provide craft activities that encourage my child to explore shapes and sizes. She builds with recyclable materials like paper tubes, boxes and cone cups.
- My child has many opportunities to play with others and to practice important social skills like sharing, waiting and taking turns.



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Teach

- I read in front of my child. This encourages him to see reading as a fun, interesting and grown-up thing to do and to want to read too!

- My child and I play games together like *Snakes and Ladders* and *Dominoes*. This encourages her to learn about numbers in a way that is fun.

- I provide my child with a variety of writing materials like markers, crayons, chalk and colour pencils. He enjoys printing his name and different letters.



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Book Talk

Looking at picture books creates an opportunity to tell stories, to share ideas and opinions and to practice speaking and listening. Remember that reading provides **Comfort, Play & Teach** time for you to share and enjoy books with your infant, toddler or preschooler at bedtime, during playtime....any time!

Materials You Will Need

- Books that interest your child. Explore different kinds like board books, cloth books, bath books, pop-ups and picture books.
- A book you've made yourself using a small photo album and pictures of family members and familiar things.

Instructions

- Hold your baby in your lap as you look at the pictures together. Cuddling up with a familiar story is a wonderful way to bond with your baby. She will begin to associate reading with being loved.
- Encourage your baby to hold the board book and to explore turning the pages. If she mouths the book or bangs it on the floor that is simply part of how she is learning about what books are for.
- Select books with clear and bright pictures of familiar objects that you can label and talk about. As you point to each picture, say something about it that relates to your baby's experiences. This helps to build her language skills.

Enjoy this more with Comfort, Play & Teach™:



Comfort: Reading with your child is a simple way to build his language skills and to show him you are interested in talking and learning more about what he thinks and knows. Create a daily reading routine where you can cuddle up together and enjoy a favourite book.



Play: Choose a storybook that you and your child have read together many times. Encourage her to hold the book, turn the pages and tell you about the pictures. Together you can point to and label familiar things. Older children can even make up their own story to tell you.



Teach: Provide books for your child at different times of the day. Select vinyl books for bath time. Add board books to your child's play materials so he can pretend to read to his teddy bear. Sing from a lullaby book together at bedtime. Your child will discover that reading can happen during different routines.

Fill and Empty, Stack and Sort

Babies explore by handling and grasping things. Filling containers and emptying them, stacking and knocking things down, and sorting all introduce infants to many math concepts. Through **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time with you, your baby learns a lot!

Materials You Will Need

- A large container and boxes or plastic containers of different sizes
- Objects in a variety of shapes, sizes and colours. **Please use only unbreakable materials!**

Instructions

- Show your baby how to grasp different objects and put them into a container, then empty the contents and repeat. Encourage your baby to imitate you.
- Using containers of different sizes, show your baby how smaller ones fit into larger ones or how smaller ones can be stacked on top of larger ones.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Smile and praise your baby so that she takes pride in her efforts as she begins to experiment and explore and makes discoveries about her ability to problem-solve. She will associate your loving words with her learning experiences and feel encouraged to continue using the materials.



Play: Filling and emptying containers is a game your baby will love to play repeatedly. He will also enjoy creating a tower for knocking down and building again. Simple materials from around the house can make the most fun toys for your baby.



Teach: Talk to your baby as she explores the materials. For example, tell her the bucket is full or empty, that what she built is very tall or that she is holding a blue square. These interactions introduce her to concepts like volume, measurement and shape.

Shapes and Sizes Necklace

Stringing necklaces is a fun way for your preschooler to explore shapes, sizes and colours and to create interesting patterns. An afternoon of making necklaces is a great way to enjoy some **Comfort, Play & Teach™** time together.

Materials You Will Need

- Pieces of string long enough to make a necklace
- Tube pasta
- Straws
- Small pieces of construction paper in different colours
- Scissors (for adult use)
- A hole punch

Instructions

- Cut the straws into different lengths.
- Cut the construction paper into shapes like circles, squares and triangles, making some small and some large. Punch a hole in the middle of each piece to make “beads.”
- Tie a length of straw to one end of each piece of string to prevent “beads” from falling off as your child strings them. Demonstrate how to slide the “beads” over the end of the string. Alternate “beads” of straw, pasta and paper shapes.
- Your child can add more “beads” until his string is full. When the necklace is complete, knot the ends of the string together so he can wear it.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Your child will feel satisfaction as he demonstrates his beading skills and completes a project. He will also proudly share information that he knows as he describes the “beads” by shape, size and colour.



Play: As your child strings the different “beads” and creates her own unique patterns, she will strengthen her fine motor skills. The necklaces she makes can be used for dressing up and pretend play.



Teach: Simple activities like beading can help your child make comparisons between different shapes and sizes and practice making decisions as he selects different beads to add to his necklace.

Letter Prints

This **Comfort, Play & Teach™** activity will encourage your child to explore letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make as she creates prints using sponges or cookie cutters.

Materials You Will Need

- Alphabet letter sponges or cookie cutters
- Construction paper
- Liquid tempera paint
- A paint tray
- Smocks to protect clothing

Instructions

- Place a piece of construction paper on the table for your child. Pour a few colours of paint onto the paint tray and place this on the table within reach.
- Place some of the alphabet cookie cutters or alphabet sponges around the tray. Your child can select which ones she would like to use for dipping into the paint and making prints.
- Sit with your child and model dipping a sponge or cookie cutter into the paint and pressing it onto the paper to make a print. Say, "I printed a letter on the paper that makes a "duh-duh" sound. Can you tell me what letter it is? That's right, it's a *d*." Notice the letters your child is printing and comment on her work.

Enjoy this more with **Comfort, Play & Teach™**:



Comfort: Children will feel great satisfaction as they become more able to recognize and name letters of the alphabet.



Play: Using sponges and cookie cutters allows your child to explore alphabet letters through handling and manipulating concrete materials.



Teach: Including the alphabet in daily activities helps to reinforce children's understanding of names of letters and the sounds they make.