

PLAY

CHILDREN 0 - 5 YEARS

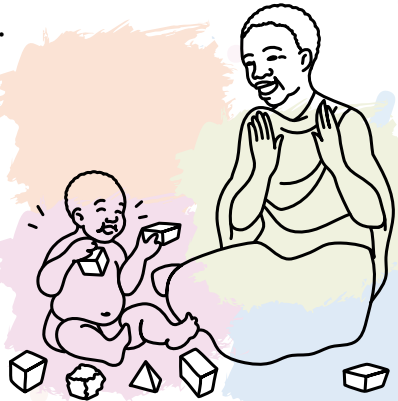


HOW CHILDREN LEARN

**From what age do children begin to learn?
What helps them learn best?**

Children start learning from birth. Their brains develop fastest in the first 3 years. This means this is the best time for the child to learn.

Babies learn best where family members notice and respond to their signals on a timely and appropriate way. This includes **talking to them** and giving them a chance to **"respond"** in any way they can.



Children learn best when they can **play with interesting objects** around them, explore them using all their **senses**, try new actions, and make mistakes.

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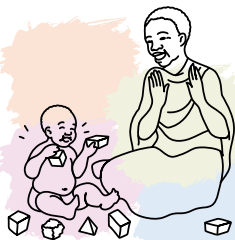


Try this in the group!

Take your child for a walk:

1. Help the child notice different **sounds** and ask or talk about who or what makes them.
2. **Touch** and talk about tree bark (rough), house wall (smooth), grass (soft), chair (hard), etc.
3. Let them catch different **smells** in the air and ask or talk about what these are (flowers, food, fire).
4. Help the child observe different **sights**, and ask or talk about the colors, shapes, and movements they see.
5. Come back and share what you and your child heard, touched, and smelled.

Your child is learning by interacting with you and by exploring things around!



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CHILDREN 6 MONTHS TO 2 years



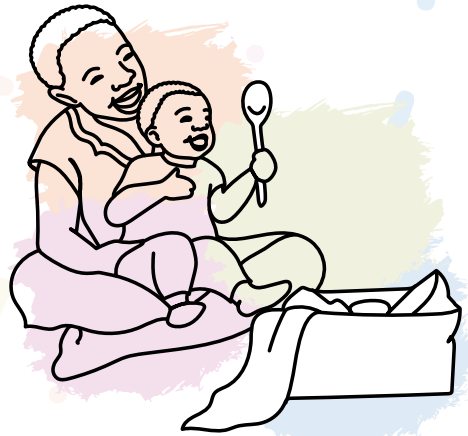
A BOX OF Treasures

What does your baby like to play with the most?

Babies learn by interacting with the world with their senses and by engaging with other people.

Providing them with household objects of different sizes, shapes, materials, and weights to explore helps them learn.

Babies will explore what they can do with the objects. They will also develop motor skills (reaching, grasping, releasing, and passing from hand-to-hand).



PLAY

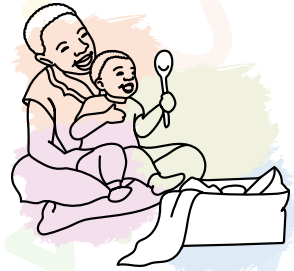


Try this in the group!

Demonstrate a prepared treasure box kit.

Let different babies take out the things they like.

Ask the parents to observe how children respond to and what they do with the materials in the box.



Try this at home

Collect items that are safe for babies to explore on their own. Place them in a basket or box for them to choose from.

Safe items might include a wooden spoon, metal bowl, plastic bottle, a plastic wristband, large bottle caps, or pieces of cloth.

Change some of the items every 2-3 weeks, as babies grow tired of playing with the same things.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

3. THE JOY OF LEARNING

**What questions do your children usually ask you?
And what questions do you ask them?**

Children are curious. When children ask questions and we take time to respond, we help their brains develop.

Asking children questions is also important as it helps children build their thinking skills and their language.



Good questions are those the child cannot answer with YES or NO. For example: **Why** do you like to visit grandma? **What** is your favourite fruit? **How** can you make this bridge with sticks?

PLAY



Try this in the group!

Ask each parent to share at least 1 example of a "good" question for a preschool child.

Then, invite them to ask their child some of the questions.
Parents should listen carefully to their children and praise the child for answering.



Try this at home

Every time your child asks you a question, take your time to answer them in some detail or even show how things are done.

Ask them more of the "good" questions at home!



PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

4. TAKING ON CHALLENGES

**What kinds of tasks do give your young children?
Why do you think it's good to give children tasks?**

Children learn by observing and helping others complete tasks that are unknown or challenging to them. Including children in "adult activities" (housework, errands) allows them to learn new skills and also feel that they are helping their family.



You can help children develop better social and thinking skills and greater self-confidence by giving them new tasks. Providing them with clues or hints can help the child complete the task.

PLAY



Try this at home

1. Encourage your child to take part in safe "adult" activities with older family members, like shopping at markets and running errands.
2. Involve your child by encouraging them to greet shopkeepers, carry bags, exchange money, and ask them questions ("This one or that one?").
3. At home, encourage your child to help you with household tasks. Give them special jobs to be responsible for (wiping the table, washing vegetables).



PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

5. MAKING MUSIC



Try this in the group!

Show your child different ways to make their own music, like drumming on a hard surface or instrument (e.g., ngoma) or shaking small stones in a container. Ask the older child: "What else can we do, to make music?" Follow their lead. Then, encourage the child to move their body to the music.

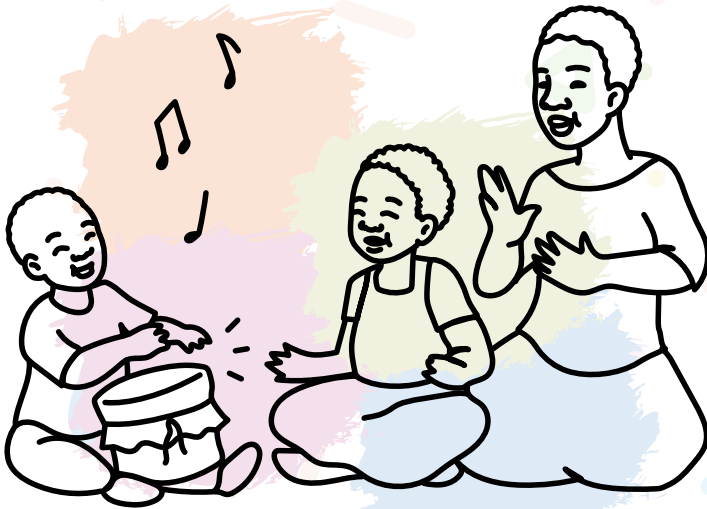
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The Why

Listening to music helps children learn to tell the difference between sounds and can improve their memory and focus.

Finding new ways to make music encourages children to be creative.

Making and moving to music can also encourage children to cooperate with others in their community.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 18 MONTHS TO 5 YEARS



FOLLOW MY DANCE!



Try this in the group!

Encourage children to watch you and copy simple movements from a modern or traditional dance.

Do the dance movement slowly. Guide their actions and praise them for learning!

PLAY

The Why

Children are not born with the ability to control their body easily and smoothly. Developing movement skills requires lots of watching and learning from others.

Learning simple dances from parents and family is a good way for children to develop these movement skills and also build fun memories with families.



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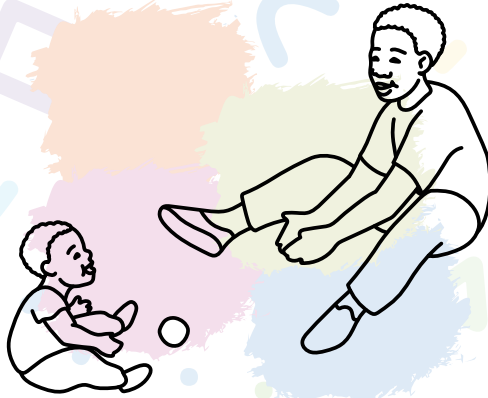
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PLAY

CHILDREN 1 - 2 YEARS



BABIES PLAY BALL!



Try this in the group!

Sit on the floor facing your baby. Roll a large ball (e.g., a football, a ball made of old cloth or socks) to them.

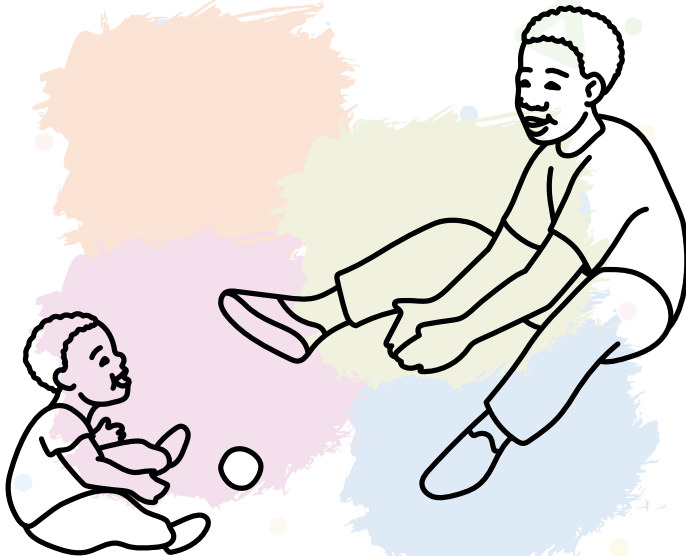
Encourage your baby to push the ball back to you. Keep playing and sharing the ball, saying "Your turn, my turn".

PLAY

The Why

Playing ball games with a baby helps them develop hand-eye coordination and gross motor skills for sitting, balancing, reaching, and pushing.

When a baby can sit without help and push a ball with their hands, they will enjoy social interactions and taking turns.



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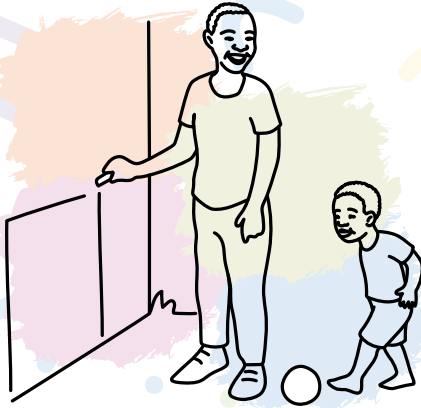


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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

8. Let's play BALL!



Try this in the group!

Ask if your child wants to play a ball game. Try one of these games:

- Kick the ball to each other
- Draw or choose a target (for example, a box or a line on the wall) and try to throw the ball there.
- Have some bottles or corn cobs lined up and try to hit them with the ball.

Praise and encourage the child. You can use a homemade ball for these games.

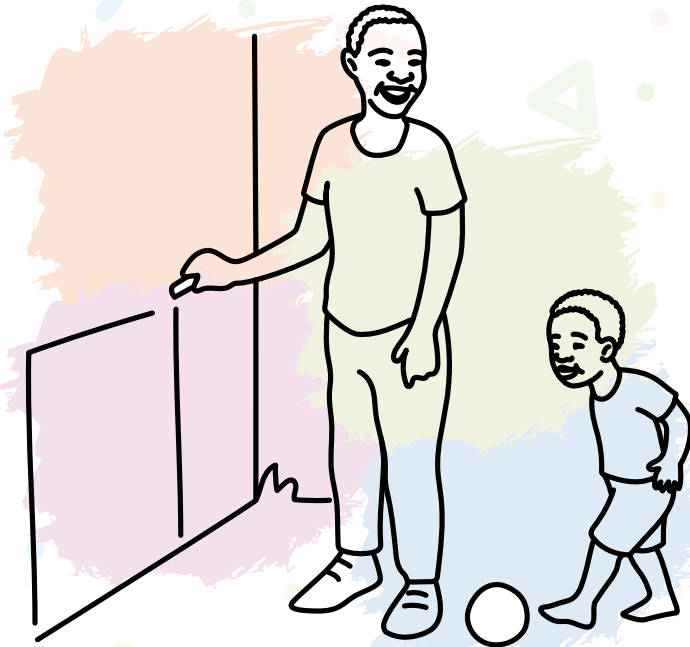
PLAY

The Why

Playing ball promotes brain development and helps children develop different skills, like hand-eye or leg-eye coordination, grasping, balance, and awareness of body position.

Children can also learn how to focus and how to cooperate with others by playing or watching ball games.

Ball games are also an excellent way to teach children they can get better at things with practice!



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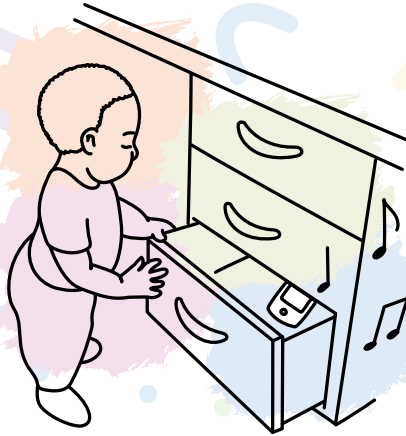
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PLAY

CHILDREN 1 - 2 YEARS



WHERE COULD IT BE?



Try this in the group!

Show some plaything to your child then hide it. Encourage your child to find it. Do it again.

If your child is old enough, you can then ask them to hide the toy and you look for it!

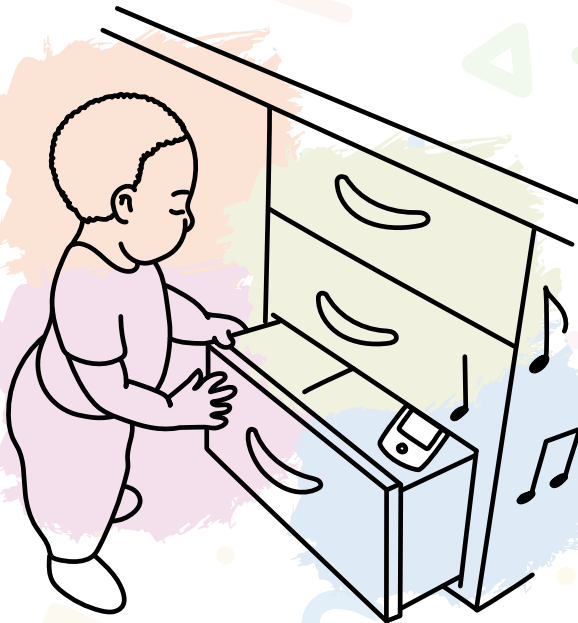
Help by giving verbal ("Is it behind the tree?") and non-verbal (looking, pointing) clues.

PLAY

The Why

Searching for hidden objects helps children learn to solve problems and to reach their goals.

You can also hide a clock or a phone that plays a tune. Looking for objects that make sounds helps children learn to focus on the sound and identify where the sound is coming from.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

10. Let's DRAW AND COLOR!



Try this in the group!

- Look together with a child for flowers and plants that give off color when rubbed on something. Collect 3-4 of them.
- Try to trace different colorful shapes on the cardboard or on the concrete floor.
- Talk about the colors and shapes you make: "How do these make you feel?"

PLAY

The Why

Looking for colors in nature and making drawings supports a child's emotional development. It also helps them to express how they see the world.

Family can encourage children to be creative by asking them what they are thinking and feeling while drawing and coloring. This is more important than just asking them to name the colors or what they drew.



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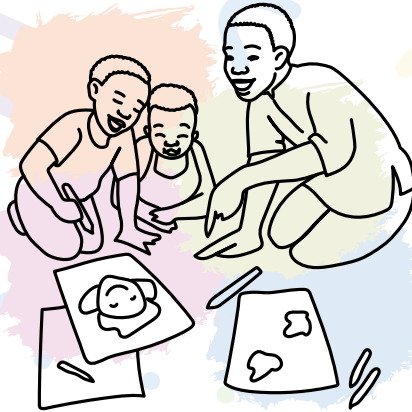
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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

11.

DRAWING ME, DRAWING YOU



Try this in the group!

Sit with your child and ask if you can draw their face. You can draw with pencils, crayons, or in the sand or dirt. Tell them what you are doing as you are drawing. Make this fun!

Then, ask your child to draw a picture of your face. Ask them to draw imaginary things, like a hat on your head or big earrings.

PLAY

The Why

Many children love to draw. Drawing a picture of something (for example, someone's face) can help children develop important thinking and motor skills as well as help them identify facial expressions in real social situations.

Drawing something they see with their eyes helps children observe and pay attention.

It also gives them a chance to practice using a pencil and to think how to place things on paper.

Drawing together with a parent strengthens emotional bonds.



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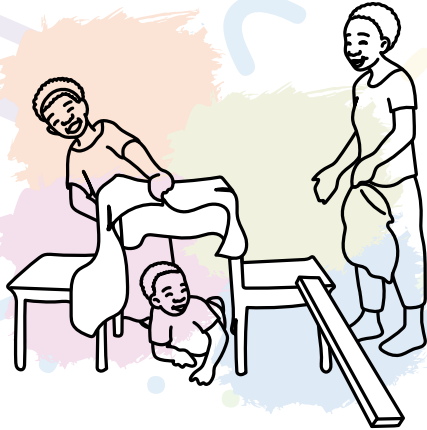


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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

12. OBStacle course



Try this in the group!

Gather items like chairs, kitenges, boxes, and clean smooth wood planks. Build an obstacle course together for the children to explore.

Guide your child and ask them how they can overcome each obstacle in front (e.g., by climbing, crawling, stepping over, balancing). For example: "Will you climb it? Or crawl through it?"

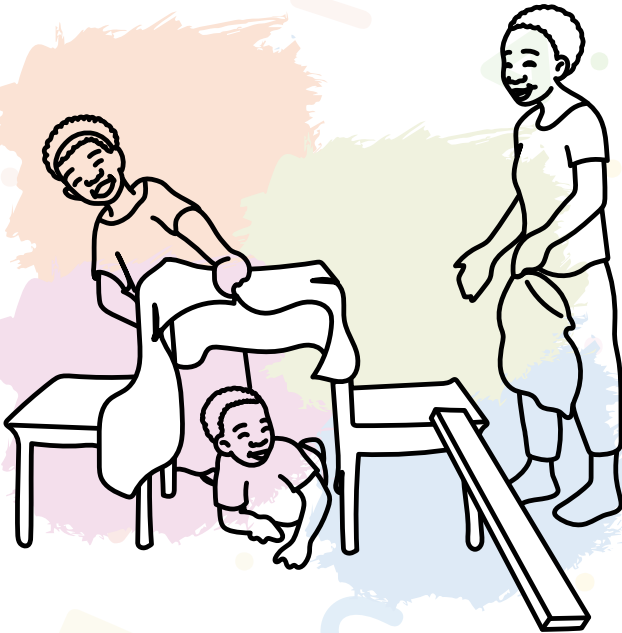
PLAY

The Why

Early childhood is an important time for developing motor skills. Children need to play every day to practice these skills.

Homemade "obstacle courses" are a fun way for children to challenge themselves by climbing, balancing, jumping, bending, reaching, and crawling through, over, and under different things.

Children who go through obstacle courses also practice creativity and learn problem-solving skills.



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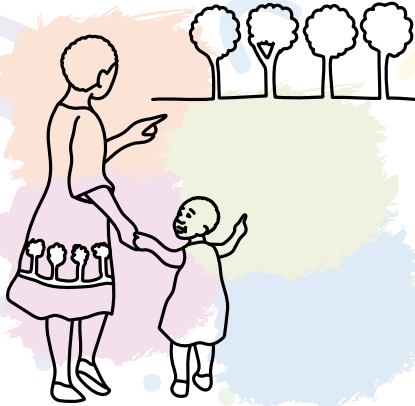


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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

13. Patterns Are Everywhere



Try this in the group!

Find and show children some patterns around, like rows of trees or patterns on a shirt or kitenge. Look for patterns together!

Sit and make patterns with children using bottle caps, leaves, sticks, or stones. Ask your child: "What comes next?" Praise them when they try!

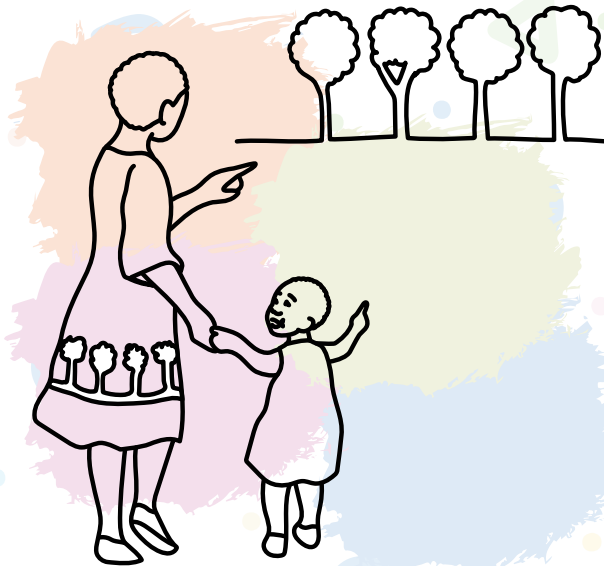
PLAY

The Why

Patterns are all around us - in the design of our kitenges, in the way we plant produce on our shambas by alternating different crops, even in the way we repeat our daily routines.

Understanding patterns is a basic mathematical skill. Children begin to understand patterns by recognizing them in their environment.

Over time, children engage in more complex tasks like copying, extending, making, and explaining patterns.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

14 RIDDLES



Try this in the group!

Play a guessing game: For example, "What is round, and can be thrown or kicked?" (Answer: "A ball"). Let the child try to make you guess too!

Ask your child a riddle from your childhood or make one up (e.g., "What is usually seen at night but not in the day?" Answer: "The moon").

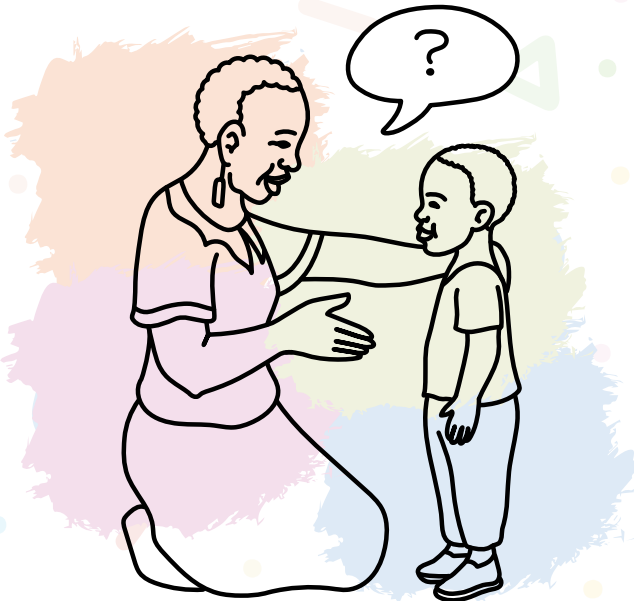
PLAY

The Why

Riddles are a fun way for children to learn.

Riddles can help children become school-ready by developing skills such as general knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, language, and creativity.

Playing riddles and guessing games during chores or trips give children an opportunity to bond with their family.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

15. Treasure Hunt



Try this in the group!

1. Go for a walk with your child. Bring a small bag or a container.
2. Help them collect safe objects from nature they see and like (leaves, stones, feathers, sticks). You can also collect your own "treasures" to motivate the child.
3. When you return, look and talk through the things you both found. Help the child tell what they picked, what they liked about the object, and what they want to do with it (make a toy, play a game, keep it as treasure, etc.).

PLAY

The Why

Many children love to collect "nature objects" or "treasures." Children can feel joy when finding special objects (stones, leaves, flowers, seeds, shells, feathers).

Looking for "treasure" will also help children become more attentive and appreciate the natural world more.

Looking through, sorting, and thinking about what they can do with their "treasures" helps children develop creativity and novel ideas.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

16.

CAN YOU FIND IT?



Try this in the group!

Gather objects of different colours, shapes, and types (bottle caps, pencils, plastic cups, pieces of cloth or paper, short and long sticks, at least 2 different fruits).

Ask children:

- Can you find some things that are round?
- Can you find some things that are green?
- Can you find some things that are soft (cloth)?
- Can you find some sticks that are long?
- Can you find some fruits?

PLAY

The Why

Finding things in a mix of different objects teaches children about categories.

Categorising involves recognising, separating, and grouping objects. For example, apple = fruit, blue = colour.

Categories help us organise our learning and thoughts and store ideas in our brain. It is a very important skill for successful students.



Try this at home

At home, gather safe household objects with different sizes (plastic cups or plates). With your child, group the objects by their size (big cups, big plates; then small cups, small plates).

PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

17.

MAKE YOUR DRUM



Try this at home (Bonus)

1. Gather materials to make a toy drum/Ngoma with your child, including a: (1) clean can, tin, or jar; (2) balloon or fabric; and (3) string or tape.
2. Place the balloon or fabric over the opening of the can, tin, or jar. Use tape or string to seal it in place. Ask your child to help tie the string!
3. Encourage your child to play with the home-made drum. Show them how to play along to a song or dance!

PLAY

The Why

Playing traditional musical instruments is a good way to feel connected to culture. Some instruments are simple and cheap to make using natural or found materials, like a drum or Ngoma.

Families can spend time with their child learning to build a drum from older relatives. This includes gathering materials and safely constructing it.

The child and other family members can then play the drum while singing, dancing, and enjoying each other.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 1 - 5 YEARS

18. MESSY PLAY



Try this at home (Bonus)

Encourage your child to play with sand, mud, leaves, small rocks, sticks, or shells. Let them build, dig, and arrange things in shapes.

Ask the child to tell you what they are doing.

Talk about how different materials feel — soft, smooth, prickly.

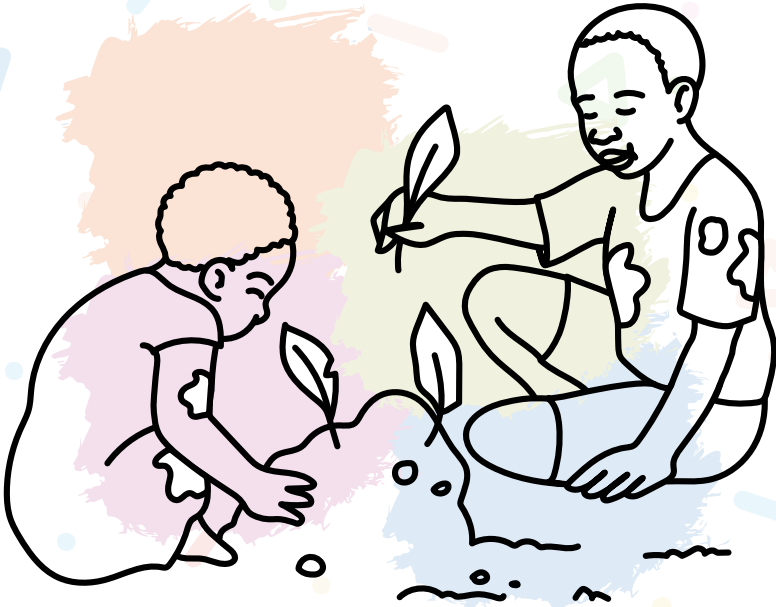
PLAY

The Why

Children learn to understand the world around them by touching and playing with things.

"Messy play" in nature with sand, mud, flowers, and grass allows children to learn about natural world.

Older siblings or adults can talk to children as they play ("What are you making here?" "These stones feel rough and these feel smooth."). This will help children improve their language and problem-solving skills.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 1 - 5 YEARS

19. Let's Dance!



Try this at home (Bonus)

Dance freely with your child to different types of music. Talk about how the music sounds (e.g., "Is it loud or soft? Is it fast or slow?").

Try dancing to local songs that are slower (e.g., Lala Toto Lala) and then try dancing to others that are fast-paced and upbeat (e.g., Jambo Bwana).

PLAY

The Why

Dancing supports development of different motor skills (e.g., balance, twisting, bending, skipping).

It also helps improve strength and endurance.

Dancing also helps children connect with their culture through dance and music.

It allows children to be creative (by creating their own dance moves) and learn musical concepts (such as rhythm and tempo).



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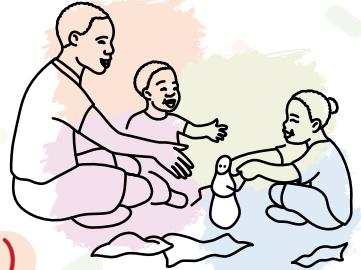
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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

20.

Little TOY BUILDERS



Try this at home (Bonus)

Give your child safe materials (sticks, bottle caps, metal tins, plastic bottles, cloth or old socks, string, wet clay or mud, pencils).

Ask them what they would like to make. Help them make a toy to play with (for example, cloth doll, car, clay animal).

Show them how they can combine different items. Let them do most of the work, and help with tricky parts.

In the end, ask them to describe what they made and how they made it. Praise them.

PLAY

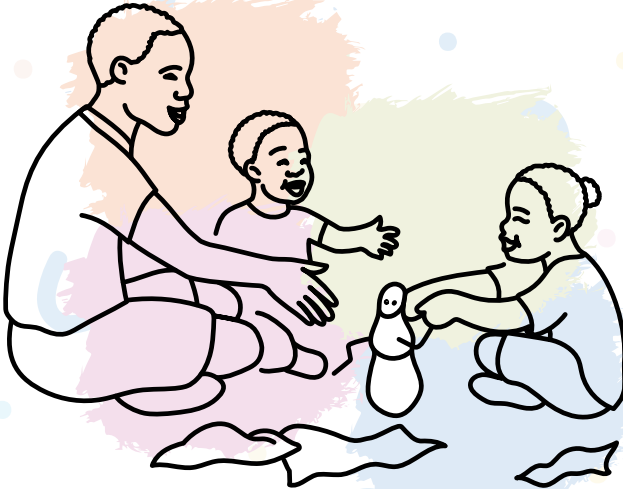
The Why

Making toys encourages children to be creative, experiment, use their imagination, and solve problems.

Making toys can help children develop important thinking skills like attention, focus, and planning.

It also improves hand-eye coordination and motor skills.

Creating a toy may also make children feel joy, accomplishment, and build their self-confidence.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

21.

Let's GO CLIMBING!



Try this at home (Bonus)

Find things around your home, like small trees, lying tree stumps or trunks, steps, or large rocks that are safe to climb. Encourage the child to try and climb them.

Watch the child to keep them safe. It's important for children to explore and learn to move, balance, and make (safe) mistakes!

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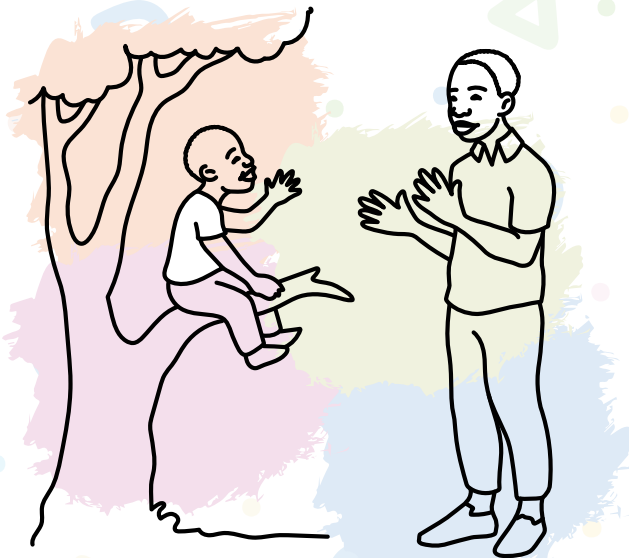
The Why

Climbing helps children to learn to move their body and develop balance and strength.

It can also teach them to use their brain to plan and make decisions about how to navigate up an object.

When done in a supervised way, climbing is a good way for children to make safe mistakes and to try to improve.

Repeated attempts will teach children body control and show them they can get better with practice!



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PLAY

CHILDREN 2 - 5 YEARS

22. DRESS UP FUN



Try this at home (Bonus)

Encourage your child to pretend to be someone else (a family member, a doctor, a market seller, a singer, or a character from a story or a TV show on Akili Kids).

Let the child borrow someone else's clothes (shoes, hat, glasses) or use objects creatively (a cloth as a scarf, leaves as money, etc.)

PLAY

The Why

Children enjoy pretending to be other people in games like "dress up."

Dress up allows children to imagine what it's like to be someone else.

These games also help children understand how other people are similar or different to them. This can help children develop empathy.



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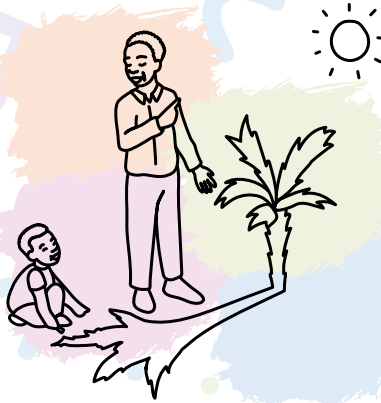
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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

23.

MEASURING TIME



Try this at home (Bonus)

On a sunny morning, help your child find a tall, straight object (such as a broom, a plant). Use a stick or chalk to draw around its shadow.

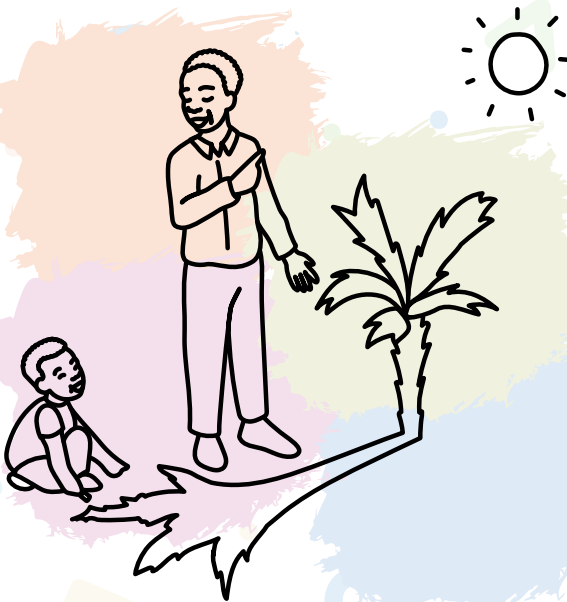
After breakfast, draw around the object's shadow again. Teach them why the shadow has moved and how much time has passed. Then do the same after lunch.

PLAY

The Why

Children understand that each day has routines, like when it's time to eat or sleep and when it's dark or light outside. But "time" is hard for children to understand. Many children know that clocks measure time passing but time is invisible to them.

Showing children that shadows move during the day gives the visual evidence that children need to understand how time can be measured and tracked.



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PLAY

CHILDREN 3 - 5 YEARS

24. COOKING IS LEARNING

Do your young children sometimes help you cook? What do they do?

Cooking with children helps them practice fine motor skills (stirring, mashing) and thinking skills (remembering, planning). Cooking allows them to see a task from start to finish.

Cooking can also improve children's understanding of numbers and other math concepts, such as more or less, same or different, and before and after.

Children may feel achievement and confidence when cooking together with adults.



PLAY



Try this at home (Bonus)

Invite your child to cook a meal with you:

1. Ask your child to help you pick the produce to cook with, for example: "Let's get one big and one small onion" or "Pick 3 tomatoes".
2. As you cook, say what you are doing (first we pour in the milk, next we stir it all together). Ask what the child thinks should be done next.
3. Ask the child to measure, pour, and mix the ingredients.
4. Talk about amounts (more, less) and numbers (we need one cup of milk).
5. Praise the child for helping!

