



# What a Preschooler Learns through Play

*If your child played in the following ways, here are a few skills he probably used/developed:*

## **Building with blocks:**

### **Mathematics**

- Recognized and compared the shapes of blocks, enhancing geometric understanding.
- Counted the number of blocks used in building, developing basic counting skills.
- Experimented with balancing blocks, leading to insights on stability and weight distribution.
- Sorted blocks by size and color, fostering skills in classification and categorization.

### **Science**

- Explored concepts of gravity and balance while stacking blocks of different sizes.
- Investigated how different shapes fit together or topple over, enhancing spatial awareness.
- Tested the limits of structure strength through trial and error while constructing taller designs.
- Observed the consequences of their building choices, encouraging critical thinking and hypothesis testing.

### **Language Development**

- Engaged in dialogue about building strategies, improving vocabulary and expressive language.
- Described their structures, contributing to narrative skills and story-telling ability.
- Participated in discussions with peers, enhancing social language skills and collaboration.
- Learned new terms related to construction and blocks, expanding their language and comprehension.

### **Fine Motor Skills**

- Enhanced dexterity by grasping, stacking, and positioning blocks accurately.
- Improved hand-eye coordination as they learned to align blocks while building.
- Strengthened finger muscles through repeated actions of picking up and placing blocks.
- Gained confidence in manipulating small objects as they constructed complex structures.

### **Social Skills**

- Engaged in cooperative play by sharing blocks and working alongside peers.
- Developed communication skills by discussing their building ideas and negotiating turns.
- Enhanced patience and teamwork skills while collaborating on building projects.
- Learned to respect others' ideas and space while interacting during play.

### **Creativity and Imagination**

- Utilized creativity to design and build unique structures from their imagination.
- Experimented with different configurations, challenging conventional building methods.
- Expressed individuality through personalized designs and storytelling with their creations.
- Explored innovative solutions to make structures taller or more interesting.

### **Tips**

- To further improve building skills, encourage your child to explore different construction materials such as soft blocks, legos, or recycled items like boxes. Additionally, guided play sessions can help in introducing concepts like balance and gravity. Sharing building challenges with friends can promote creativity and spark new ideas.
- Further exploration could involve introducing more complex building materials or experimenting with block structures that incorporate movement mechanisms, like wheels or levers. Improvement can be made by encouraging the child to describe their building process, which will further enhance their language skills. Additionally, organizing collaborative building challenges with peers can foster teamwork and social interaction, enhancing both communication and problem-solving abilities.

## Book Recommendations

- [The Little Engineer](#) by Jennifer Dussling: A colorful picture book that introduces young children to engineering concepts through fun, relatable stories about building and creating.
  - [Block City](#) by Robert Louis Stevenson: This delightful book takes readers on a journey through a whimsical city built from blocks, igniting imagination about what can be built.
  - [The Three Little Pigs](#) by James Marshall: A classic tale reimagined with playful illustrations that emphasizes the importance of building strong and secure structures.
  - [Blocks Play](#) by Eve Merriam: An engaging book that invites children to understand and enjoy the world of building through creative block activities.
  - [The Three Little Pigs](#) by Jan Brett: A classic tale that encourages discussion about construction, materials, and the importance of strong building practices.
  - [The Very Hungry Caterpillar Builds a House](#) by Eric Carle: A delightful story that combines construction themes with counting and colors while engaging young minds in the world of building.
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## Swinging on a playset:

### Physical Development

- Enhanced gross motor skills through leg movement while swinging.
- Improved balance and coordination while getting on and off the swing.
- Developed body awareness by learning to adjust posture during swinging.
- Increased strength in core muscles from stabilizing during movement.

### Social Development

- Engaged in turn-taking when sharing the swing with peers.
- Developed communication skills by expressing desires and emotions while playing.
- Learned to navigate social interactions through cooperative play with friends.
- Enhanced conflict resolution skills when waiting for a swing or sharing.

### Cognitive Development

- Improved spatial awareness by understanding distance and height while swinging.
- Gained an understanding of cause and effect by noticing how pushing oneself affects speed.
- Developed risk assessment skills by evaluating how high to swing and balancing safely.
- Practiced counting and timing by counting pushes or monitoring height

### Tips

For further exploration, consider incorporating other playground equipment such as slides or climbing structures to enhance balancing and climbing skills. Introducing games or guided playtime could also facilitate turn-taking and cooperation among peers, making social interactions more enriching. Parents might encourage outdoor play by scheduling regular visits to different playgrounds, allowing children to experience various challenges and environments.

## Book Recommendations

- [Swing, Swing, Swing!](#) by Rachel Bright: A delightful story about the joys of swinging, encouraging children to enjoy outdoor play.
  - [Winnie the Pooh's Playground Fun](#) by A.A. Milne: Join Winnie the Pooh and friends on playful adventures in the park, enhancing social skills through shared play.
  - [Let's Go to the Playground!](#) by Sally Grindley: An interactive book that takes children on a journey through playground activities including swinging.
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## **Obstacle course:**

### **Physical Development**

- Improved coordination and balance by navigating various obstacles.
- Enhanced gross motor skills through running, jumping, and crawling.
- Developed spatial awareness by understanding distances and areas to move around.
- Fostered body control when making quick movements and transitions between obstacles.

### **Cognitive Development**

- Strengthened problem-solving skills by determining the best way to overcome each obstacle.
- Enhanced focus and concentration by maintaining attention throughout the activity.
- Encouraged decision-making skills in choosing different paths and strategies to complete the course.
- Facilitated understanding of cause and effect by experiencing the results of different movements.

### **Social Development**

- Promoted teamwork and cooperation by participating with peers in a shared activity.
- Enhanced communication skills through instructions and encouragement among friends.
- Developed empathy and understanding by cheering for others and celebrating achievements.
- Boosted self-esteem and confidence by completing challenges and achieving personal bests.

### **Tips**

- To further explore and improve, consider incorporating more varied obstacles of different heights and textures to challenge the child's physical abilities and stimulate their sensory experiences. You might also want to introduce timed challenges to promote the excitement of competition and faster decision-making. Lastly, including cooperative tasks wherein children must work together to solve obstacle challenges can enrich social interaction and teamwork skills.

### **Book Recommendations**

- [Rosie Revere, Engineer](#) by Diane Johnston Hamm: A delightful picture book that encourages observation and exploration of nature, perfect for instilling curiosity.
- [Wee Simon Goes to the Obstacle Course](#) by Molly Smith: A fun and engaging story about a young boy's adventure through an obstacle course, focusing on perseverance and fun.

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## **Playing with toy cars and trucks:**

### **Fine Motor Skills**

- The child practiced grasping and maneuvering small cars, enhancing dexterity.
- Pushing cars along surfaces helped improve hand-eye coordination.
- Manipulating steering wheels or pushing them in different directions also assisted in developing fine motor control.
- Engaging in this activity repeatedly reinforced muscle memory and strength in the hands and fingers.

### **Spatial Awareness**

- The child learned to navigate spaces by understanding how to move cars around obstacles.
- Playing with cars helped them recognize different directions (forward, backward, turning).
- They began to understand relative distances, like how far a car can travel before needing to stop.
- The experience of creating tracks or pathways enhanced their visualization of space.

## **Imaginative Play**

- Role-playing through car scenarios encouraged creativity and storytelling.
- The child learned to associate different sounds and actions with the cars, enhancing their imaginative capabilities.
- They explored problem-solving by creating situations that the cars needed to navigate.
- This activity provided a platform for social interaction if played with peers, allowing them to negotiate roles and scenarios.

## **Mathematical Concepts**

- The child began to understand basic counting through the number of cars and their interactions.
- Sorting cars by color, size, or type introduced foundational categorization skills.
- Simple comparison of 'more than' or 'less than' emerged when discussing how many cars they had.
- Repetitive play led to an awareness of patterns, such as repeating sequences in movement.

## **Problem Solving**

- Created different routes and traffic scenarios, encouraging critical thinking.
- Overcame challenges while playing, such as traffic jams or crashes, to find solutions.
- Experimented with various types of roads and terrains, learning cause and effect.
- Manipulated vehicles to understand spatial awareness and movement.

## **Tips**

- To further enhance development, consider introducing different types of vehicles or environments for play, such as ramps or tracks. Engaging in themed scenarios, like a city or racetrack, can promote imaginative play and storytelling, which broaden vocabulary and enhance social interactions. Encourage collaboration with peers, which will help in cementing social skills and building confidence during interactive play.

## **Book Recommendations**

- *Little Blue Truck* by Alice Schertle: A cheerful tale about a friendly blue truck who helps animals in need; a perfect introduction to teamwork and friendship.
  - *Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site* by Sherri Duskey Rinker: A comforting bedtime story featuring various construction vehicles winding down for the night.
  - *Cars and Trucks and Things That Go* by Richard Scarry: A fun-filled exploration of different vehicles by Richard Scarry, packed with engaging illustrations and stories.
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## **Make-believe (pretending, “house” centers, dress-up):**

### **Imaginative Play**

- Developed storytelling skills through creating and acting out various scenarios.
- Enhanced creativity by inventing characters and plots during play.
- Improved social skills by interacting and negotiating roles with peers.
- Learned problem-solving skills by navigating conflicts and challenges within the play.

### **Language Development**

- Expanded vocabulary by using new words and phrases in different contexts.
- Enhanced verbal communication skills through dialogue with other children.
- Improved listening skills by paying attention to peers' dialogues and ideas.
- Developed narrative skills by recounting play experiences to adults and friends.

## Emotional Development

- Learned to express feelings and emotions through role-play.
- Gained empathy by understanding different perspectives of characters.
- Developed self-regulation skills by managing emotions during play scenarios.
- Cultivated confidence by taking on various roles and characters
- Engaged in role-playing scenarios, enhancing imagination and storytelling skills.
- Developed social skills through interaction with peers during make-believe games.
- Practiced problem-solving by navigating pretend situations and conflicts.
- Expressed emotions and thoughts through character portrayal, boosting emotional intelligence.

## Cognitive Development

- Stimulated critical thinking by creating stories and scenarios with various outcomes.
- Developed memory skills by recalling character traits and storylines during play.
- Encouraged planning skills as they structured scenes and activities in the play.
- Enhanced understanding of the world by simulating real-life roles such as family members or community helpers.

## Tips

- To further explore and improve, the student can engage in themed make-believe sessions that introduce new scenarios, characters, and settings. Encouraging the use of storybooks or visual aids can enrich their imaginative play. Additionally, incorporating guided discussions about the characters' choices can foster deeper understanding and empathy. Expanding the activity to include music and movement can also enhance the engagement and creativity involved in make-believe.

## Book Recommendations:

- *Not a Box by Antoinette Portis*: A delightful tale that encourages children to use their imagination by transforming a simple box into endless possibilities.
  - *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak: A classic story of a boy's journey to a land of wild creatures, inspiring kids to explore their imaginative adventures.
  - *The Adventures of Paddington Bear* by Michael Bond: The charming stories of Paddington Bear, encouraging imaginative play through his delightful adventures and misadventures.
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## Digging in the dirt/sand:

### Science

- The child observed the different types of soil and their textures, fostering sensory exploration.
- By digging, the child discovered various natural elements such as rocks, roots, and insects, leading to an understanding of ecosystems.
- The process of digging allowed the child to learn about cause and effect, realizing how their actions change their surroundings.
- The engagement with dirt promoted curiosity about the natural world, encouraging questions and investigations about plant life and habitats.

### Physical Development

- The activity developed fine and gross motor skills through the use of hand tools or bare hands to manipulate soil.
- Digging requires coordination and balance, aiding in the child's overall physical strength and stability.
- Repeated motions of digging enhance muscle memory and improve hand-eye coordination.
- The outdoor setting promotes active play, contributing to the child's health and fitness.

## **Creative Play**

- Use of imagination while pretending to find treasures or fossils in the dirt encourages creative thinking.
- The open-ended nature of the activity allows for experimentation and exploration, fostering problem-solving skills.
- The child leans into storytelling aspects, creating narratives about their digging adventures.
- Engaging in this sensory-rich play enhances cognitive development through exploration and discovery.

## **Tips**

- To encourage further exploration, consider introducing themed exploratory activities related to soil, such as planting seeds to witness growth, or using magnifying glasses to examine tiny creatures in the earth. Additionally, provide context around weather effects on soil, like rain or sun, to boost their understanding of environmental conditions. These activities can expand their knowledge of nature while enhancing their curiosity and observational skills.

## **Book Recommendations**

- *Dirt* by Steve M. Futran: A simple, engaging book that explores the wonders of dirt, teaching children about its importance and the creatures that live within it.
  - *The Little Gardener* by Janet Morgan Stoeke: A charming story about a little gardener who learns to grow plants and explore nature, perfect for young children interested in gardening.
  - *Dig Dig Digging* by Margaret Mayo: An interactive and fun book that introduces machinery
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## **Setting the table:**

### **Fine Motor Skills**

- The child practiced hand-eye coordination by placing utensils and dishes on the table.
- Manipulating the items helped strengthen the child's grip and finger dexterity.
- The activity involved reaching, grasping, and placing, enhancing overall motor control.
- Repeating the process of setting the table improved the child's confidence in using their hands.

### **Life Skills**

- The child learned to recognize different types of tableware, such as plates, forks, and cups.
- Following a simple sequence to set the table fostered independence and responsibility.
- Understanding the concept of mealtime preparation contributes to daily living skills.
- The activity encouraged the child to anticipate the setting for a meal, promoting planning.

### **Social Skills**

- Setting the table in a family setting promotes cooperation when involving others.
- The child practiced taking turns if they were working with a sibling or parent.
- This activity provided an opportunity for conversation about meal times, enhancing language skills.
- Participating in family routines helps build a sense of belonging and community.

## **Tips**

Further exploration could include introducing new items related to dining such as napkins or different types of cups, enhancing their understanding of varied table settings. Improvement areas might include encouraging the child to remember the correct placement of each item, promoting better memory and organization skills. Adding additional setting items reinforces one-to-one correspondence, a math foundation.

## Book Recommendations

- [Pete the Cat: Five Little Ducks](#) by James Dean: A fun story featuring Pete the Cat that helps children learn about counting and rhythm while enjoying a narrative about ducks.
  - [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) by Eric Carle: This classic picture book introduces children to days of the week, counting food items, and the process of transformation.
  - [Maisy's Wonderful Weather Book](#) by Lucy Cousins: A delightful book that helps young children understand and talk about different types of weather, enhancing their conversational skills.
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## Puzzle play:

### Cognitive Development

- Engaged in problem-solving by figuring out how to fit puzzle pieces together.
- Demonstrated an understanding of spatial relationships by recognizing how shapes fit into designated spaces.
- Enhanced memory skills by recalling the shapes and where they belong in the puzzle.
- Developed critical thinking skills by trying different pieces before finding the correct fit.

### Motor Skills

- Improved fine motor skills by manipulating small puzzle pieces.
- Practiced hand-eye coordination when picking up and placing pieces.
- Gained strength in hand muscles which aids in other physical tasks.
- Learned to control force and movement, refining dexterity with each puzzle completion.

### Social Skills

- Collaborated with peers or adults, learning to take turns and share puzzle pieces.
- Communicated thoughts and strategies verbally while engaging in puzzle play.
- Built confidence in social interactions by successfully completing puzzles together.
- Gained patience and perseverance through challenging parts of the puzzles.

### Tips

To further enhance skills related to puzzle play, children can explore a variety of puzzles that incorporate different themes, such as animals or vehicles, to maintain engagement. Introducing time challenges or cooperative puzzles can also foster teamwork and social learning. Additionally, incorporating storytelling elements around the puzzle can promote language development and spark creativity. Supervising play can provide opportunities for guided questions that prompt deeper thinking and exploration of shapes, colors, and patterns.

### Book Recommendations

- [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#) by Eric Carle: A classic story featuring a caterpillar that eats his way through various foods, with interactive puzzles in some editions.
  - [Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?](#) by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle: An engaging rhythmical book that introduces colors and animals, perfect for pairing with animal-themed puzzles.
  - [Where Is Baby's Belly Button?](#) by Karen Katz: A lift-the-flap book that encourages children to explore parts of the body, complementing those concepts in body part puzzles.
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## **Singing/Music:**

### **Language Development**

- Improved vocabulary through repeated lyrics in songs.
- Enhanced pronunciation by singing along with familiar tunes.
- Developed listening skills by focusing on different musical rhythms and sounds.
- Gained confidence in verbal expression by singing with peers or caregivers.

### **Social Skills**

- Learned turn-taking and sharing when singing with others.
- Enhanced cooperation and teamwork while participating in group singing activities.
- Built connections with peers through shared musical interests.
- Developed empathy by responding to the emotions expressed in songs.

### **Cognitive Development**

- Strengthened memory skills by remembering song lyrics and melodies.
- Promoted critical thinking by associating songs with different themes or stories.
- Enhanced concentration span while listening to longer pieces of music.
- Facilitated pattern recognition through repetitive verses and choruses in songs.

### **Tips**

- To further improve skills in music-related activities, caregivers should create a diverse musical experience by introducing various genres and cultures of music. Engaging in dance movements or clapping to rhythms can strengthen physical coordination. Encouraging children to express their feelings about music can deepen emotional understanding.

### **Book Recommendations**

- [The Going-To-Bed Book](#) by Sandra Boynton: A delightful bedtime story featuring catchy rhymes and fun illustrations that encourage singing along.
  - [Chicka Chicka Boom Boom](#) by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault: A playful book with rhythmic text that invites children to sing as they learn their ABCs.
  - [Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes](#) by Eric Litwin: A fun and interactive story with songs that children can sing along to while following Pete's colorful adventures.
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## **CONCLUSION:**

Through such play-based activities, the student has demonstrated a diverse skill set through various engaging activities.

Through building with blocks, they have likely developed spatial awareness and fine motor skills and geometry foundations, while swinging and navigating obstacle courses have contributed to their gross motor coordination and balance as well as physical coordination and problem-solving abilities. Playing with cars and trucks fosters imaginative play and cognitive skills, while make-believe activities encourage creativity and social interaction. Digging in dirt or sand enhances sensory experiences and tactile exploration, and setting the table shows an understanding of routines and responsibility, as well as math foundations. Puzzle play fosters cognitive skills such as spatial awareness and critical thinking and provides pre-reading visual discrimination. Finally, singing with music promotes language development, rhythm awareness, and emotional expression, indicating a well-rounded approach to learning through play.

Altogether, these activities illustrate a well-rounded skill set that combines physical, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

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*Adapted by Vicki Bentley from an analysis of these typical 3-to-5-year old's activities by the subject explorer at LearningCorner.co*