



Parent Newsletter

PLAY IS IMPORTANT!

Play is a powerful tool for growth and the foundation of early childhood development. It helps children explore, build skills, and prepare for success in life and school. Neuroscience shows that during play, especially imaginative and social play, the brain forms and strengthens neural connections that are critical for cognitive, emotional, and social development. When kids play, they learn. Encourage it, enjoy it, and know that every moment of play helps shape a strong, smart, and happy child! 

**PLAY TODAY,
LEAD TOMORROW!**
Download our free resource to
learn about the importance of
play in the early years!



Try Open-Ended Toys

Open-ended materials like blocks, art supplies and pretend play items can spark a whole world of imagination! Stock up your home play space with age-appropriate items that allow children to experiment and create their own worlds and scenarios.



Let Your Child Lead

Make time for daily play and let your child lead it! Resist the urge to direct their play too much; instead, support their ideas and celebrate their creative achievements. By doing so, you'll help foster a lifelong love of learning and exploration.



Join the Fun!

Playing with your child builds bonds and models social skills! As they're playing, try making observations, asking open-ended questions, and posing challenges that prompt problem-solving! For example "What do you think you could build with these materials?"



FIVE SENSES GAME

MATERIALS NEEDED:

Various objects that engage the five senses!

- SIGHT: Handheld mirror, small flashlight
- SMELL: Hot sauce, oranges
- TASTE: Honey, popcorn
- TOUCH: Pine cone, bubble wrap
- HEARING: Bell, whistle, salt shaker

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Set up a tray, plate, or table with objects that represent each of the five senses: sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing.
2. Talk with your child about their five senses and when they use each one. Ask if they ever use more than one sense at the same time.
3. Invite your child to explore each object one at a time.
4. Ask open-ended questions to encourage conversation, such as:

- Tell me what you are doing.
- "How does that feel?"
- "What does it sound like?"
- "How does it taste?"
- "Where do you think it came from?"

TIP: For an added challenge, have your child close their eyes and guess the object using only one sense at a time. Talk together about the characteristics of each object and how different senses help us learn about the world around us.

Source: Action for Children

Coming Up...

Bluey! A Playful Celebration | Northwest Branch Library | January 16, 2026 | 2-3:30pm

Celebrate everyone's favorite Australian puppy, Bluey and her family and friends. We'll share stories, activities (bingo with Bingo!), crafts, and perhaps even dive into Dance Mode! [REGISTER](#)

Family Story Time | Utica Library | January 19, 2026 | 10:30am - 11:00am

Enjoy stories, rhymes and songs that help develop early literacy skills! Designed for ages birth through 5. [LEARN MORE](#)

Pinecone Bird Feeders | Alum Creek Park Nature Center | January 21, 2026 | 2pm - 4pm

Celebrate National "Squirrel Appreciation Day" by making some homemade birdfeeders with pinecones for Ohio's birds and squirrels! Supplies provided. [LEARN MORE](#)

"What if I was to tell you that a game of peek-a-boo could change the world?"

Need a little inspiration? Scan the QR code to watch seven year old Molly Wright deliver a TED talk on how parents can support children's development at home every day!

