

# PLAY IS CHILDREN'S WORK

Some dualities to ponder now and again (and again)

*What's the line between:*

- *Play and work?*
- *Playing and Playing Around*
- *A toy and a tool or a stick on the ground?*
- *Playing with objects and playing with another person(s)?*
- *A game and a toy?*
- *Having fun and taking your play seriously?*
- *Playing to learn and learning to play?*

## Qualities Essential for Play:

- **Engaging and personally satisfying** (You are absorbed; may be having fun but may be taking what you are doing seriously)
- **Intentional** (you chose to be doing it)
- **Creative Problem-solving**—you are thinking about what you want to do, trying out strategies including negotiating (in social dramatic play), making meaning.

## Different Stages/types of Play

There is a developmental sequence in what kind of play a child does but the sequence is incremental—earlier stages enter into later ones

Stage	Characteristics	Examples
Functional or sensory play Begins in infancy and continues to adulthood.	At this stage, the player explores the sensory world, often with repetitive motions.	Sand and water play Includes stacking up and knocking down things Making pounding noises etc. <i>Even as adult we do the first stage whenever we doodle, "fiddle", whistle while we work, hum or cuddle.</i>
Constructive Dramatic Play Begins with toddlers May quickly merge into full dramatic play	Toddler begins to use real objects to act out "pretend" to do something; sometimes the child will use an object that is like another –eg a stick as a sword	Child pretends to talk on a toy telephone, Child pretends to drive with a toy car Props such as dolls or action figures continue longer
Dramatic Play Early childhood—is a very important part of the child's social-emotional development into primary years	In fully developed dramatic play the child is able to "imagine" everything—from the props to the situation that is being acted out; the "story line may shift quickly	Playing house, baby Playing space wars, Beauty Queen pageant
Games with Rules Children need to be about 5 before rules and the concept of winning and losing make sense	A game has preset rules, there is a goal that signals the game is over, usually there are winners	Includes board games, action games, card games, athletic games. Most adults take this kind of play very seriously

## Social-Emotional Development and Play

### Solitary play:

Play is done alone, without interaction or awareness of others; all stages of play may be solitary, including functional play of infants as they study their hands or wiggle their toes, practice turning over. Adults may also do solitary play—e.g. Solitaire (what else?)

### Imitative/Call and Response Play—

Adult may initiate or model play—both frequent and very important features of play, especially for infants and toddlers. Includes making faces/sounds, peek-a-boo, singing, finger plays, etc.

### Parallel Play

Very typical of toddlers and into threes; two children play at a similar activity side by side but do not interact with each other or join playing in a significant way.

### Social/ Cooperative Play

Two or more play together as peers. Begins with threes and continues up through adulthood. Social/interactive play is absolutely critical for maturity and development of character traits such as

- Perspectivism (ability to see another's point of view)
- Negotiation, including ability to compromise, defer gratification,
- Social responsibility including respecting the rights of others, accepting rules
- Persistence

# Is It Play

If so, what kind? Why do you think so?



# Is It Play?

If so, what kind? Why do you think so?



# Is It Play

If so, what kind? Why do you think so?



# Is It Play

## If so, what kind? Why do you think so?





### **Anecdotal Observation of a child working/playing at a playground**

*Mireille (18 months old) smiles with delight at the expanse of freshly spread sand--she sits on the edge of the sandbox and takes a handful of sand with her right hand to fill the yellow stacking cup--when it is 3/4 full, she transfers it to the blue cup-- one in each hand--then dumps the blue cup out on the sidewalk--repeats 3 or 4 times--once she puts the filled blue cup up to her mouth but doesn't make any attempt to swallow.*

*She is somewhat distracted by the brief incursion of 7 or 8 year olds --a class of some sort-- She continues to be quite observant especially if older children are around.*

*Now Mireille walks around a bit with 2 of the cups over her ears--a she moves she is softly murmuring o herself and smiles -to hear the sound change.*

*Mireille goes back to picking up fistfuls of sand with her right hand and putting into the yellow striped cup which she can hold safely in her left--a loud Da-a an then softer "bulunk" sound. I showed her about scooping up the sand with the wooden kitchen tool set I'd got--put sand in and tapped it down--a nice sound apparently. Mireille spent at least ten minutes scooping with either the fork or the spoon or for a while with both--she was often not successful in actually getting the sand into the cup but she shows no frustration or even interest in filling the cup as an objective. She is much more interested in the scooping process.*

**What kind of knowledge and ability does this child have?**

**In what sense might she be said to be playing? To be working?**

- Fine motor and Gross motor development
- Exploration and Problem-solving
- Personal traits including attentiveness, persistence, independence, disposition?
- What seems to be of most interest to the child? Is there any "product"?