

A Practical Guide to Understanding Associative Play in young children

What is associative play?



Associative play is when two or more children play with similar toy sets. The children may share toys and talk to each other about their play.

Why is associative play important?

- Children can learn social skills by talking with each other and sharing toys
- Children begin to take interest in what other children are doing
- Children can learn more complex play and social behaviors by observing peers



Begins and continues through the preschool years

How does associative play support children's development?

Associative play promotes the development of:

- problem-solving
- cooperation,
- self-advocacy,
- thought organization,
- confidence,
- more complex language,

and much more!

How can adults support associative play?

- Provide opportunities for the child to play alongside other children
- Encourage children to interact with other children during play
- Make comments about the play activity
- Encourage sharing of the play materials
- Provide the child with time and space to engage in associative play

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