

Why Block Play is Under Rated



With technology advancing at such a fast pace, society is focusing on children learning technology at an earlier age. Before we can use technology, we need to build upon developing functional skills. According to current research, having concrete play experiences that are fun and engaging helps create a deeper understanding of shapes and 3D objects in the brain opposed to sitting at a desk learning. Thus, the very nature of block play is embedded in children's development and growth in all areas.

Block Play Develops Children's skills

Block play is any type of stacking, building and creating materials used in construction play. They can be as simple as wooden planks or building blocks like Lego. These are valuable learning tools for young children of all ages. It supports children's development and growth such as:

Physical development: As children move around structures, they develop muscles by crouching, crawling, standing and balancing. They practice grasping and moving blocks of various size and shapes and improve hand-eye coordination as they add more blocks or toys into the play.



Cognitive: Building structures require children to learn a variety of concepts such as spatial awareness as they add blocks, math as they compare size, shape, colour, create patterns, count, add, and measure length of blocks.

Problem Solving Skills: Through trial and error, children learn what is the best method of creating a structure thus developing problem solving skills.

Language: When planning with other children to create a structure they must communicate their ideas, needs and desires with their friends. This will also help to increase their vocabulary. Children are also able to create signs and labels for their creations which encourages the development of writing skills.

Social emotional: When children work together, they need to learn social rules and how to ask for more blocks, share ideas and see things from other children's point of view. They learn to negotiate what is the play going to be like, what they will build together and who does what task.



Stages of Block Play

The stages outlined help clarify and provides parents with ideas of what is going on and how they are able to add to children's play.

- 1. Carrying (1-2 years):** Learning the sensory aspects of blocks by carrying, holding, dropping, packing and repacking blocks endlessly.
- 2. Stacking (2-3 years):** Lining up blocks in rows along the ground or up high in towers.
- 3. Bridging (3 years):** Creating bridges or passage ways by using two upright blocks to support another block.
- 4. Enclosures (4 years):** Placing blocks to enclose an object or area. First with one level of blocks on the ground then two or more levels of enclosures.
- 5. Pattern and Symmetry (4-5 years):** Building structures using patterns, symmetry and balance in construction.
- 6. Representational (5-6 years):** Creating more realistic looking structures. Children enjoy naming structures and use blocks to create cities, cars, and houses. They build structures for use in dramatic play.

How to support your children's block play

- Play with your children and follow their lead. They love when you show an interest in what they are doing.
- Add in other toys of interest into the block section, such as dolls and create a doll house for them.
- Talk about what they are doing and use descriptive language. This builds on existing vocabulary such as "I see you are putting the block on top of the last one." Or ask "How will the blocks fit in this box?"
- Work on turn taking skills as you take turns adding blocks
- Provide large amounts of blocks, it allows for more creative play
- Plan what you are building (discuss, draw or write it out)

Making homemade blocks

You can even use everyday items at home to make your own blocks. (Wash wash/wipe all items first)

- Cardboard boxes
- Shoe boxes
- Old gift boxes
- Dollar store boxes
- Food item boxes and containers
- Plastic bottles/ containers
- Tin containers
- Go on a nature walk and find rocks, sticks, pinecones, any natural material to add to existing blocks (experiment to see which works best)

For added fun, add pictures of family members, cut and paste pictures from old picture books or magazines, or add other sensory textured materials onto boxes. Another option is to add things inside of the containers to make noise. Be sure to seal the containers tightly to prevent any possible choking hazards. If a container that you are using is not sturdy enough to stand up or hold additional weight of other building material, try adding newspaper inside of it before sealing it shut. This should help to hold the integrity of the item.

Disclaimer and Source of Information:

<http://www.iowaaeyc.org/Participants%20copy%20of%20Iowa%20AEYC%20Block%20Presentation%202017.pdf>

https://iowaccrr.org/blog/2017/12/28/CCRR_Blog/Block_Play_is_STEAM_Learning/ar/1183/

<https://www.parentingscience.com/toy-blocks.html>

<https://info.scholarschoice.ca/blog/the-benefits-of-block-play-for-infants-and-toddlers-in-your-childcare-centre>

http://journeyintoearlychildhood.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/4/6/12466023/stages_of_block_building.pdf

<https://childcare.extension.org/the-block-center-in-child-care/>