



Teaching Support video script: Early Years play-based learning

Play is a timeless activity that takes place in every culture all over the world. It's not just the opposite of work, it's meaningful and active engagement that has a very powerful, positive, impact.

Play encourages children to take different approaches to tasks and problems without fear of failure. It improves language, cognitive, physical, social and emotional development; including self-regulation, working memory and wellbeing.

Your role, as a supporting adult within play, is to create an environment which encourages children to be playful.

Child-initiated play

Child-initiated, or free, play is when children control their play and make choices about where and how to play and what to play with. It builds on their natural urge to play, bringing enjoyment and positive mental health. It allows them to explore and develop their own ideas, freely and creatively. It gives them a greater level of independence.

Children can follow their own interests, which can have positive effects on concentration. It gives them opportunities to develop their social learning, without adult intervention, such as sharing and cooperating.

Your role in child-initiated play is to provide the time, space and resources for play to happen. You can join in with child-initiated play but remember that you want children to control their own play, so you should take your lead from them.

Guided play and adult-led activity

Sometimes adults can get involved and take an active, but still supporting, role. You can set up a playful activity or problem to be solved – explain, and then step back and observe. Or you could lead children in an activity, either engaging with or actively guiding them in play.

Remember though, that children are experts at play. Challenge them and give them the space and opportunities they need to learn through what they do best.

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