The Child Unplugged

SOCIAL PLAY: SHARE, CONNECT, LEARN

Activity Book



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Introduction

Children love exploring social interactions through hands-on play with others. These activities introduce early concepts of sharing, turn-taking, communication, and cooperation in a fun and engaging way. Children interact, connect, and play alongside others while learning how to express themselves, listen, and respond in social situations. It's not about doing things the "right" way, but about exploring relationships, practicing interactions, and discovering through shared play.
This builds early skills in communication, social awareness, emotional understanding, problem-solving, and cooperation simply and enjoyably.







Why Social Play Is So Valuable

These activities encourage:

- Social interaction and connection with others
- Sharing, turn-taking, and cooperation skills
- Early communication and language development
- Listening and responding to others
- Emotional awareness and understanding feelings
- Problem-solving through group play
- Confidence in social situations
- Building friendships and positive relationships

How to Support Play at Home

Create a playful space where children explore social interaction through hands-on group play. They share, take turns, communicate, and play together while building early friendship and cooperation skills.

Basic setup:

- Shared toys and materials (blocks, dolls, balls, role-play items)
- Small group play area or circle space
- Sorting trays, baskets, or open-ended props

Simple steps:

- Show children how to use materials together
- Encourage sharing and turn-taking during play
- Invite them to talk, listen, and respond to each other

Helpful tips:

- Start with small group play (2–3 children)
- Model simple social phrases like “my turn,” “your turn,” “let’s share”







Ideas

Provide shared toys and everyday items like blocks, balls, dolls, or household objects. Encourage children to play together, take turns, talk about what they are doing, and enjoy playing alongside others naturally and confidently.

PEEKABOO PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Scarves or cloths

Hands or simple hiding spots

- Soft toys or objects (optional)

WHAT TO DO:

- Cover your face with your hands or a scarf and say “Peekaboo!”
- Encourage children to hide and reveal themselves, too.
- Use toys or objects to play peekaboo together.
- Take turns hiding and finding.

BENEFITS:

- Builds social connection and shared attention
- Encourages turn-taking and interaction
- Supports early communication skills
- Develops understanding of object permanence
- Promotes laughter, bonding, and confidence
- Strengthens focus and nticipation skills



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with simple hand peekaboo.
- Use scarves for gentle hide-and-reveal play.
- Hide toys under cloths for added fun.
- Use mirrors for self-peekaboo play.
- Let children lead the game as confidence grows.

FRIENDSHIP ART PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Large paper or shared drawing sheet
- Crayons, markers, or paint
- Stickers or stampers
- Open table or floor space

WHAT TO DO:

- Give children one shared paper to draw on.
- Encourage them to scribble, draw, or add stickers together.
- Talk about what each child is adding.
- Celebrate the shared finished artwork.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages sharing and cooperation
- Builds early social interaction skills
- Supports communication and turn-taking
- Develops creativity and self-expression
- Improves fine motor skills
- Builds awareness of working with others



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with large paper for more space.
- Use stickers for easier participation.
- Let children draw at the same time freely.
- Add themes like “our garden” or “our happy picture.”
- Work alongside children to model sharing and language.

BUBBLE CHASE TOGETHER

WHATS NEEDED:

- Bubble solution and wand or machine
- Open indoor or outdoor space
- Optional: music for added fun

WHAT TO DO:

- Blow bubbles into the air.
- Encourage children to chase and pop them.
- Join in together, taking turns and playing side by side.
- Talk about the bubbles as they float and pop.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages social interaction and shared joy
- Builds gross motor skills and coordination
- Develops hand-eye coordination
- Supports communication and engagement
- Encourages turn-taking and cooperation
- Promotes active movement and energy release



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with slow, low bubbles for easier catching.
- Use smaller spaces for younger children.
- Add “count the bubbles” for simple learning.
- Let children take turns blowing bubbles.
- Use themed play like “catch the magic bubbles” or “rainbow bubbles.”

SHOPPING TRIP PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Basket, bag, or small trolley
- Toy food, boxes, or safe household items
- Empty containers or play money (optional)
- Optional: labels or simple “shop” setup

WHAT TO DO:

- Show children how to put items in a basket.
- Encourage them to pretend they are shopping in a store.
- Talk about what they are buying and where they are going.
- Take turns being the shopper and shopkeeper.

BENEFITS:

- Develops imagination and creativity
- Encourages language and communication skills
- Builds early maths skills (counting, sorting, choosing)
- Supports understanding of real-life experiences
- Improves social and role-play skills
- Encourages decision-making and independence



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with a few simple items.
- Use familiar objects from home.
- Add labels or picture cards for “shop items.”
- Extend play with pretend money or receipts.
- Include family members or toys in the role play.

JUMP LIKE ANIMALS

WHATS NEEDED:

- Open play space
- Animal picture cards or toy animals (optional)
- Music for movement fun (optional)

TIPS:

- Take breaks if they get tired (little legs, big effort!)
- Repeat favourite animals—toddlers love repetition

WHAT TO DO:

- Name an animal and show how it moves.
- Invite children to copy the movement.
- Jump like a frog, stomp like an elephant, waddle like a duck, or slither like a snake.
- Take turns choosing animals to act out.

BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor skills
- Strengthens balance and coordination
- Develops body awareness
- Encourages listening and following directions
- Supports imagination and pretend play
- Builds strength, confidence, and movement control
- Introduces animal vocabulary and action words



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with two or three simple animals.
- Use pictures for children to choose movements.
- Add sounds and animal stories for extra fun.
- Create an animal movement obstacle course for more challenge.

TEA PARTY TIME

WHATS NEEDED:

- Toy tea set (cups, teapot, plates)
- Soft toys, dolls, or family members as “guests”
- Small table, mat, or play area
- Optional: pretend food items

WHAT TO DO:

- Set up a simple “tea party” space.
- Show how to pour and serve pretend tea.
- Encourage the child to offer drinks or food to toys or people.
- Let them explore and lead the pretend play freely.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages imagination and creative thinking
- Builds early social and role-play skills
- Supports language and communication development
- Develops fine motor skills (pouring, holding, serving)
- Promotes confidence and self-expression
- Encourages understanding of everyday routines



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with just a cup and teapot for simplicity.
- Use real safe household items if toys aren’t available.
- Join in gently to model play, then step back.
- Add more items or “guests” as confidence grows.
- Let the child lead and create their own tea party story.

BALL ROLL & CHASE

WHATS NEEDED:

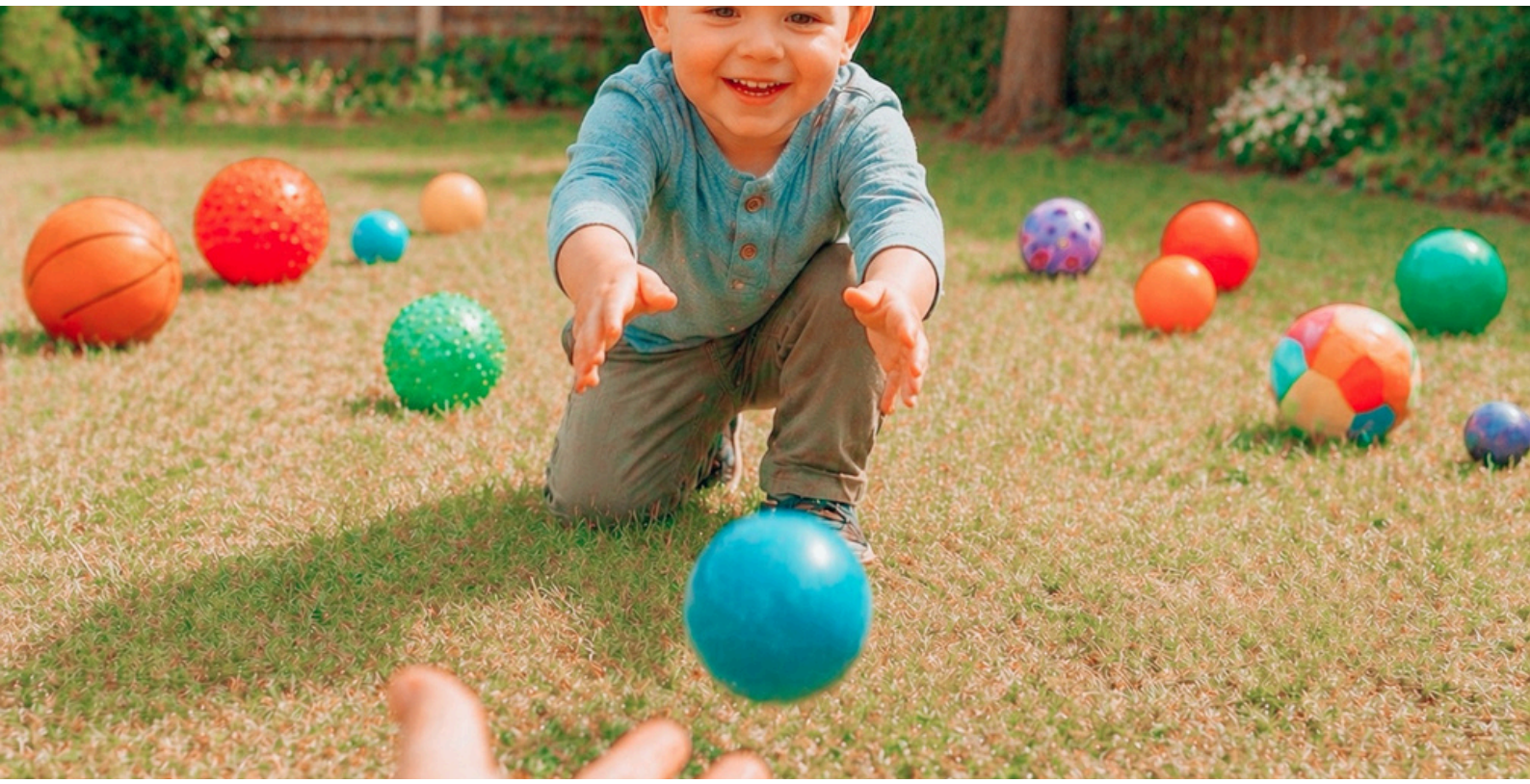
- Soft balls of different sizes
- Open space (indoor or outdoor)
- Optional: cones or markers to guide rolling direction

WHAT TO DO:

- Sit or stand facing the child.
- Roll a ball gently towards them.
- Encourage them to roll it back or chase it.
- Repeat the back-and-forth rolling and retrieving.

BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor skills
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Develops coordination and timing
- Encourages turn-taking and social skills
- Strengthens focus and attention
- Supports active movement and energy release



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with slow, close rolling for beginners.
- Use larger, softer balls for easier control.
- Increase distance as skills improve.
- Add targets or goals to roll the ball into.
- Play with multiple children for group turn-taking.

DANCE AND FREEZE

WHATS NEEDED:

- Music player or songs
- Open space
- Optional: musical instruments or scarves for movement

WHAT TO DO:

- Play music and encourage children to dance and move freely.
- Stop the music at random moments.
- When the music stops, children must freeze in place.
- Restart the music and repeat the activity...

BENEFITS:

- Builds gross motor skills
- Improves listening and attention
- Develops self-control and body awareness
- Encourages rhythm and timing skills
- Supports emotional regulation
- Boosts confidence and creativity



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with slow music and longer dance times.
- Use clear visual cues along with music stops.
- Add simple movements to copy before dancing freely.
- Introduce themed dances (animals, superheroes, nature).
- Allow children to lead and choose dance moves.

CLEAN-UP TOGETHER GAME

WHATS NEEDED:

- Child-sized tools (broom, dustpan, spray bottle, sponge)
- Cloths or wipes
- Baskets or bins for sorting
- Safe, non-toxic cleaning supplies

WHAT TO DO:

- Choose a simple song with actions.
- Sing together and model actions like clapping, waving, or stomping.
- Encourage children to copy and join in.
- Repeat favourite songs and take turns choosing actions.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages cooperation and teamwork
- Builds sharing and turn-taking skills
- Develops responsibility and independence
- Supports listening and following directions
- Strengthens sorting and problem-solving skills
- Promotes positive social habits and routines



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with tidying just a few toys.
- Use labelled baskets for easy sorting.
- Make it playful with songs or a timer game.
- Turn clean-up into themed play like “toy rescue mission” or “treasure hunt.”

DOLL FEEDING

SET UP:

- Doll or soft toy
- Small bowl, plate, or cup
- Spoon
- Pretend food or real snack items (optional)

Place the items together on a small mat, tray, or blanket to create a simple feeding space.

EXTENSION IDEAS

- Wipe the doll's face after feeding
- Offer the doll a drink
- Feed several toys in turn
- Put the doll down for a rest after the meal
- Have a small "picnic" with the doll

LANGUAGE

- "Baby hungry."
- "Yum yum."
- "More?"
- "All done."

BENEFITS:

- Builds empathy and nurturing behaviour
- Encourages early pretend play
- Supports language development
- Strengthens fine motor skills through scooping and feeding
- Helps children understand mealtime routines



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Younger toddlers: Offer one spoon and focus on simple feeding actions.
- Less mess: Use empty bowls and pretend food.
- Sensory seekers: Use soft real foods like mashed banana or yoghurt.
- Children who love movement: Carry the doll to different feeding spots.
- Older toddlers: Add simple routines like feed, wipe, then rest.

SOCIAL PLAY ACTIVITIES

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Calm, creative, social play exploration experiences for babies and young children

Using familiar, accessible materials