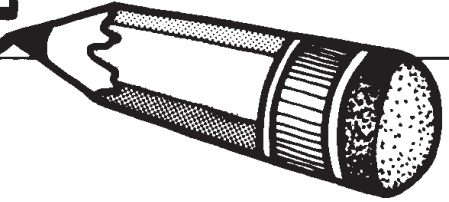


Parenting Pipeline



A newsletter for parents of second-grade children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service



Play is the Business of Children

Play does far more than keep children amused, out of mischief or out of the way. Through play, children grow in all areas of development.

Physical

A child develops coordination through play. Large muscles – those in the arms, legs and trunk – develop first and allow a youngster to walk, run, jump, hop and skip. With age, smaller muscles develop and allow eye, hand and finger coordination to develop. Examples of small muscle skills include working with tools, writing and working puzzles. A child uses energy and can release tensions while playing.

Mental

A child learns by doing and by experimenting. Play provides opportunities to learn about the

physical environment of size, shape, color, weight, space and texture as well as about one's own impact on the environment.

Social

A child learns acceptable ways of behaving through social contact with peers and adults. Some developing social skills include sharing, cooperating, owning, giving, accepting, winning, losing and disagreeing as well as dependability, orderliness and initiative.

Emotional

Through play, a child learns to understand emotions and to express them acceptably. Play should provide necessary emotional satisfactions of success and esteem.

Every child needs toys to stimulate curiosity, to encourage creativity, and to challenge physical development and skills. This list might help you select play equipment for your child:

- Construction sets
- Hobbies, collections (weaving or sewing kit, stamps, bugs, coins)
- Games (for two or three players such as dominoes and board games)
- Bicycle
- Swing set
- Jumping rope
- Work bench and tools
- Doll house
- Paper dolls, other simple cutouts
- Dress-up clothes, costumes
- Books (easy to read)
- Art materials
- Blackboard and chalk
- Balls or sports equipment

Creativity and Children

The word “creativity” is a bit frightening for many of us. We usually think of great artists, writers and scientists when someone talks about the creative person. Few of us stop to realize that *we all* have the power to be creative and that most of us are involved in creative experiences and activities every day. It’s possible to be a creative person without being an artist. There are creative bricklayers, salesmen, lawyers, teachers and certainly creative parents. Anyone who lives with children must continually be looking for new ideas and ways of helping and teaching children, and this involves creativity. Creativity is a special way of seeing, learning and thinking about things. It involves new ideas, feelings and experiences.



Every child has the potential to be creative. Experiences at home and at school help shape a child’s expression of creativity – for better or worse. Remember, there is rarely only one right way to do things. Encourage your child to find alternatives.

By helping your child be more creative and develop into a creative adult, you are actually giving her greater access to all that life has to offer. She will be able to find more pleasure and satisfaction in all parts of living.

Much of the play equipment listed earlier will aid in developing your child’s creativity. Some other ideas include:

- Play dough used for modeling can be made by mixing 1 to 1½ cups flour and ½ cup salt. Slowly add ½ cup water and ¼ cup vegetable oil. Knead well and store in a covered jar in the refrigerator.
- For bubble play, fill a shallow pan with ½ inch of clean water. Add 4 big squirts of liquid detergent and mix gently. Dip one end of an empty thread spool in the mixture. Blow gently through the other end.
- Magazine pictures or family photos can be arranged in designs and glued on boards.
- Your child enjoys dramatic play and will enjoy dress-up clothes. Old clothes, shoes, jewelry, briefcases and hats are fun for dress-up play.
- All sports equipment, especially bicycles, should be the correct size. Roller skates and inline skates can be dangerous. All bikers and skaters need helmets. Serious skaters will want to invest in protective gear, such as wrist guards and knee pads. Teaching your child to put her outdoor toys away prevents unnecessary wear and rust.
- Young sledders should wear helmets.

Hopefully, this list will help you develop some ideas for encouraging your child to become more creative. Happy playing.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with second-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other nutrition, youth and family programs.