

Support for Parents

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With the use of technology being a vital source during this period of lockdown, I have been thinking what we used to do before the days of televisions and tablets. During this extended period in our homes, we are in a situation where we are constantly having to get creative and think about the best ways to keep our children occupied.

A nice way to think about play is to use the continuum below. Bergen (1998) presents a continuum ranging from behaviours having the greatest internal component of agency and autonomy (**Free Play**) to those having the greatest external control (from adults/environment) component (**Work**). Play is about having a balance of all areas and giving value to each.

Bergen's (1998) Play continuum

Free Play Guided Play Directed Play Work disguised as play Work

In school, it is likely that children spend a majority of the time in *Work*, which may be adult led and has a specific end goal/outcome. There are also opportunities for *Free Play* at breaktimes. When thinking about the sorts of play activities we can engage in, I will be exploring mainly the left side of the continuum *Free*, *Guided* and *Directed* Play with different play activities presented below. Sometimes a play activity can involve two or three of these areas and move in different directions on the continuum. It is important to remember that all play requires adult supervision.

Bergen's (1998) explanation of the five points on the continuum is as follows.

1. **Free play** has the greatest sense of internal control and motivation. This type of play is often seen in Nursery and Reception Classes and often described as 'child-led' or 'child initiated' play. Often this sort of play is sparked by a child's interest in an object and has an element of spontaneity.
2. **Guided play** occurs within a loosely defined framework of social rules, requiring children to give some attention to externally imposed control, reality and motivation. For example, children having access to arts and craft boxes or Lego.
3. **Directed play** is defined and led by adults, for example, asking children to draw a certain picture or baking following a recipe.
4. Almost play or '**work disguised as play**' describes task-oriented activities chosen by adults which are not inherently playful but that can be transformed into directed or guided play activities. 'I Spy' games to develop letter knowledge or counting games to develop maths.
5. **Work** refers to activity that is engaged in to reach an adult-led goal or outcome. For example, it is likely that your child has been set work or a project whilst away from school.

The ideas below aim to capture a range of the play activities which can be adult guided and free play.

Make belief play- this is where children may re-enact a familiar social scenario. This is particularly good for younger children, but older children may also have fun too.

Shops – getting into role with one person playing the shop keeper and the other person the customer. Children may want to draw food items and design money to use in their game.

Doctors/Nurses – children often have experiences of going to the doctors. One child may be the patient and the other the doctor, and the children act out checking each other and wrapping bandages around arms and legs.

Going on an adventure/holiday – children may use bags and items around the house to go either on a picnic, to the beach or on holiday.

Den making – why not make a den using what you can find around the house. Chairs, blankets, rugs, cushions. Be prepared for the mess! Why not shine torches inside the dark den.

Arts and crafts

I know egg boxes may be limited, but this CBeebies clip shows how children can make helicopters, plant pots and a treasure chest using egg boxes. Although this is an adult led activity, children often like to engage in free play using the objects they have made.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVTEJgYtoBk>

BBC Indoor activities for children - From making paper mache to playdough recipes.

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/howto/guide/indoor-activities-kids>

Orchard toys - Downloadable and printable sheets for children.

https://www.orchardtoys.com/dept/activity-sheets_d0129.htm

Getty Art Museum - For those of you that prefer art improvisation, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California set a challenge for people to recreate a work of art using items around the house. Why not follow the three simple steps and have a go? See what people came up with <https://twitter.com/GettyMuseum/status/1242845952974544896>

Z Arts are doing various family activities which have been shown on the Facebook page. Activities include making masks to dancing.

Construction activities

Lego ideas - <https://www.freehomeschooldeals.com/free-printable-30-day-lego-challenge-instant-download/> 30 day LEGO challenge

Children's baking

At a time when shopping is an 'essential' activity and we do not have all the ingredients to hand, baking can seem more of a challenge than fun! There are a few recipes which are pitched at a level suitable for primary aged children, which they will (hopefully!) enjoy eating

too. The idea is to encourage children into healthy eating – there are even ideas to get children to eat fish!

BBC Good Food kids cooking- <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/collection/kids-cooking>

Let's Get Cooking - <https://letsgetcooking.org.uk/lets-get-cooking-at-home/>

Gardening themed ideas

Marks and Spencer Little Garden - There are many ideas which range from making your own plant pot with old milk cartons or tin cans to playing flower themed matching pair games. <https://www.marksandspencer.com/c/food-to-order/little-garden/play>

Science Ideas

The Dad Lab - If scientific experiments are your thing, why not make your very own bubble wand using 3 items – a sock, washing up liquid and a plastic bottle. Why not let us know how you get on!

<https://www.facebook.com/196827063992420/posts/1196294080712375/?vh=e&d=n>

Reference

Bergen, D. (1998). *Play as a medium for learning and development*. United States: Association for Childhood Education International.