



*Learning to speak, read, write and communicate well begins at birth. Here's what you can do to build your children's language and literacy skills in fun everyday activities.*

# The Power of Play

Tip Sheet #10

## Why?

Play is one of the most important things that children do. Children learn about themselves and others during playtime. They learn to explore, discover, and enjoy the world and their role in it through play. Play helps children learn the skills they need to do well in school and later in life.

TV is a reality of everyday life. There are a lot of good programs on TV; however, it is important to set limits. The Canadian Pediatric Society recommends **no TV for children under two years old** and a maximum daily screen time of **one hour for children two to five**.

## Starting at Birth:

**Make play a part of your daily routines.** Add play to routines such as diapering, bath time or mealtime.

**Play turn taking games.** Try playing peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake, or copy each other's simple actions and sounds (shaking a toy, rolling a ball, putting a block in a container, clapping, blowing a kiss...).

**Get down to her level and play along.** Place colorful toys in front of your baby when she is on her tummy.

**Spend time with other babies.** Babies start to be interested in other babies at two months. By nine months, she will communicate and make faces with other babies.

**Provide a safe play space.** Let your baby crawl and explore.

## Additional Tips for Toddlers and Preschoolers:

**Encourage independent play.** Provide opportunities for your child to play on her own.

This will help her to be self reliant for small periods of time.

**Join in your child's play.** Remember to follow her interests. Suggest ideas and play along, but don't take over.

**Provide a variety of materials for different kinds of play.** Children don't need expensive toys to have fun:

- blocks, cardboard boxes, puzzles, playdough and water can be used in many ways;
- dress-up clothes and props (plastic dishes, play money...);
- arts and crafts materials (scissors, glue, crayons, markers, construction paper);
- balls, things to climb, and open space are ideal for active play.

**Play simple games that require turn taking.** Play Simon Says, Follow the Leader, Hide-and-Seek, Tag,...

**Explore together.** Take your child to a variety of indoor and outdoor play places. She can play with other children at local parks, Best Start Hubs and community programs.

## Additional Tips for Kindergarten Children:

**Provide a variety of play opportunities.** Children need a balance between daily unstructured playtime and time spent at planned activities (swimming, gymnastics, hockey, music...)

**Play board games or card games that have rules.** Play Snakes and Ladders, Candyland, Go Fish, Memory....

**Focus on the fun.** Children will quickly learn that in certain games someone wins and someone loses. Encourage your child not to give up on games or tasks when she plays with others. Children need to learn to cope with disappointments as well as successes.