

6) Is there a benefit to letting my child “just play”?

When rugs become deep seas, wood chips become shark teeth, and a pair of pants becomes the body of a snake, you have the foundation of free play. Free play is spontaneous, self-motivated, and totally controlled by children. It is also [a key right of every child](#) to have time to play and rest (article 31).

Why is play so important?

Free play provides rich opportunities for social, moral, and emotional development. It provides unique opportunities for kids to develop their own personality and increase their ability to handle stress and conflict. It is in free play that children learn to understand and co-operate with others.

Free play may be the best way for children to truly express themselves and learn the skills they need for success in life.

Does free play make my child smarter?

Yes! Neuroscientists tell us that free play creates new pathways in the brain that expand creative and intellectual capabilities.

Scientists have also found that children who participate in free play tend to be more intelligent, more creative, and happier than children who do not participate in free, unstructured play.

How do I support play?

As an adult, it is your job to create opportunities for free play. It's important to support your child rather than direct your child.

This can mean taking your child outside into all kinds of different natural environments. It can mean letting them interact with new friends, providing non-traditional play equipment (like hay stacks, milk crates, logs, mud, etc.) that will challenge your child.

It's also important to keep in mind that **organized sports and music lessons cannot be confused with play**. These are activities that are organized and directed by adults. Organized activities definitely have their own benefits, but they can never replace the vital benefits of free play.

Read more

[LiveScience's article on the benefits of play](#)

[Parenting Science on the cognitive benefits of play](#)

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