



# CMNH Play Based Learning Tip #17

## When do children start playing together? Part I

The short answer is that toddlers as young as 18 months old can participate in cooperative play together. Research shows that from birth to about age 4.5, children will go through a progression of social play with their peers.

- This progression was developed by Mildred Parten (1932), who established several "levels of social play" that are still used today.
- Important to note- Parten's research is about play with peers, so playing "alone" means without peers. Grown-ups are very important play partners for children from birth.
- Children may play with peers in different ways throughout their early years. The progression is not always linear

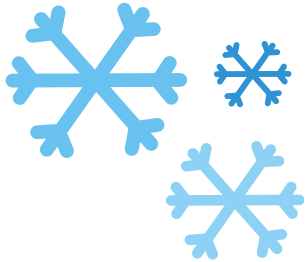


Source: The Power Of Play: A Research Summary on Play and Learning Dr. Rachel E White for the Children's Museum of Minnesota

**Children's Museum of New Hampshire**

[www.childrens-museum.org](http://www.childrens-museum.org)





# Winter Activity Idea: Snow Day Fizzy Drips

This is an easy science experiment that children love to try! It can be themed for winter or holidays, or any theme, really! You will need baking soda, vinegar in a cup, a pipette or spoon, a plate or tray, and food coloring for the basic experiment. Choose small items like erasers, trinkets, sequins or laminated pictures to create a theme.

## Steps:

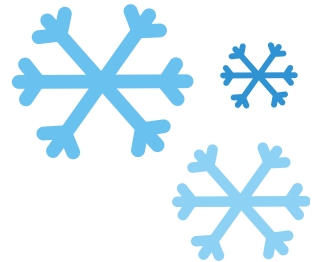
1: Set up the experiment ahead of time so that children do not know what is hiding under the baking soda. Place items on the plate or tray, and cover with baking soda.

2: Add a few drops of undiluted food coloring in different places on the baking soda (note: items underneath may get slightly dyed). Children can help with this step when age appropriate.

3. Place the plate, cup with vinegar, and pipette on a tray or covered work surface, and invite children to add vinegar to the plate

4. As the baking soda and vinegar react, children will see and hear fizzing, and see bubbles. They may also observe the colors spreading around. As questions such as "What do you see/hear?" and "What do you think is happening?"

5. Add some counting by asking "how many objects did you find?" or asking children to sort the objects by size, colors, etc. You could hide letters, and see if they can make words!





# CMNH Play Based

## Learning Tip #18

### When do children start playing together? Part 2- Parten's Stages of Play

Parten's Levels of Social Play:

1. Solitary play (2 - 2½ years): When a child plays alone\*
2. Parallel play (2½ - 3½): When children may be doing similar activities but they play separately.
3. Associative play (3½ - 4½): When children play separately but may share, or communicate with others about their play.
4. Cooperative play (4½): Children are engaged in play with a common goal and they work cooperatively to achieve the goal.

\*Children play with caregivers during all of these stages before starting cooperative play with peers. Children can also start cooperative play earlier than these stages suggest. Children benefit from observing other children and grown ups playing, and they learn how to play and communicate from observing others.

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# Winter Activity Idea: Make a "Cake" for Wildlife

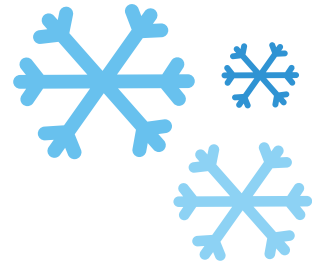


This activity is a great way to slow down and observe wildlife in your own backyard, or at school! Invite children to use snow to build a cake with a few "layers" that they can decorate with wildlife friendly food. You will need: bird seed mix, sunflower seeds (for feeding birds), baby carrots, greens such as lettuce, pinecones, and acorns. Or any combination of wildlife friendly foods you have available.



## Steps:

- 1: Bring all of the food items outside, play in containers or on a tray for easy access
- 2: Invite children to build a layered cake out of snow either in small groups, or each child can make a smaller cake.
3. Invite children to decorate the cake using the wild animal friendly items such as acorns, pinecones, and birdseed
4. Add some math by asking children to try to make a pattern in their design!
5. Observe: Take some time to observe the finished cake, and see if any animals come. Make a hypothesis about what kind of animal will come first, and why? Practice quietly observing for a bit! Check on the cake later in the day, or the next day, and investigate the tracks that are nearby. Can you guess who ate the cake by looking at the tracks?



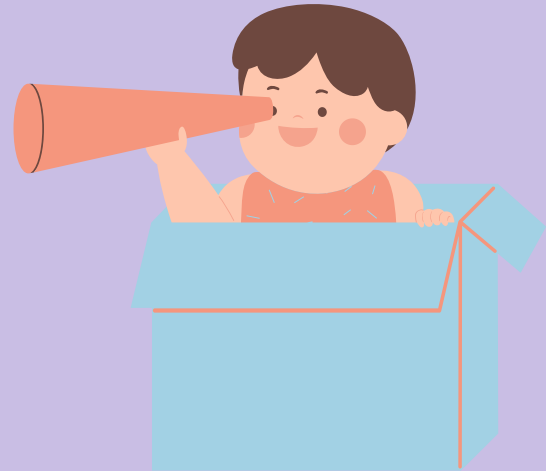


# CMNH Play Based Learning Tip #19

## What is independent free play?

Free play is:

- Spontaneous
- Child-directed (child chooses activity)
- Active and screen free
- Creative and fun



Independent free play is:

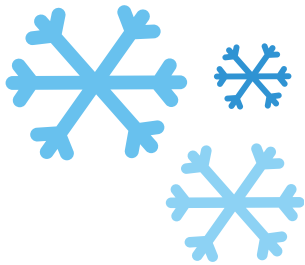
- Unprompted, chosen by the child
- Unaided by adults or peers
- Can be physical & active
- Aligned with the child's interests





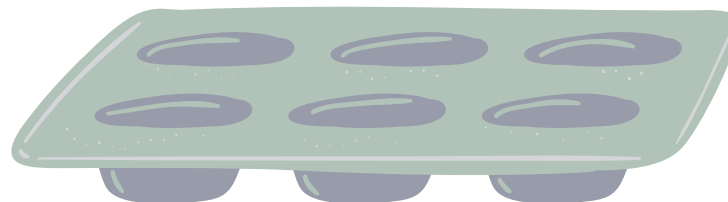
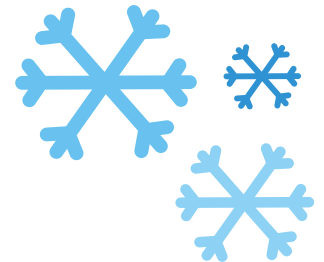
# Winter Activity Idea: Snow Kitchen

Take a few play kitchen items outdoors for play time to allow children to be creative using water and snow! This is a great activity for warm late winter days when children can play outside comfortably for a few hours



## Steps:

- 1: Bring play kitchen and cookie cutters, or kid friendly kitchen items outside
2. Bring water outside in a few containers- add food coloring if desired
3. Allow children to play in the snow with the kitchen items
4. For spring add mud into the mix if you would like- be sure all items can get muddy, wet, and dirty!
5. You can opt to bring the snow inside, and use a bin to do indoor snow kitchen play!





# CMNH Play Based Learning Tip #20

## The value of independent free play

Independent free play allows children to:

- Play in a safe, risk free environment- this allows for exploration without anxiety
- Choose their activity- this allows for activities that match their own learning style and needs
- Be creative- being creative may start with being bored, however, free play allows children to learn to cope with and overcome boredom



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# Holiday Activity Idea: Fine Motor Shamrocks

Make festive shamrocks by adding beads or cereal to pipe cleaners. This project is a fun way to work on fine motor skills and pattern recognition. You can use the same materials to make a "pattern snake" by forming a loop at the top of one pipe cleaner and creating a pattern with beads. The shamrock with cereal doubles as a bird feeder!

You will need: beads or cereal and pipe cleaners

## Steps:

1. You will need 3-4 pipe cleaners to create a shamrock
2. Make a loop with the pipe cleaner and start adding beads. Children can plan out their patterns before adding beads
3. Twist the loop closed leaving a bit of extra pipe cleaner to attach it to the other pipe cleaner "leaves"
4. Twist each leaf together, and then create a "stem" by twisting the ends of the pipe cleaners together

