



CMNH Play Based Learning Tip 5

Dress Up and Dramatic Play

In many of the exhibits at the Museum, there are costumes or accessories for children to try on. An apron at the cafe, a mail bag at the post office, or a raincoat on the Gundalow boat. Dramatic Play and playing "dress up" is part of Play Based Learning, but what do children learn from it?

- Dramatic Play, also called pretend play or imaginative play, allows kids to take on different roles and think creatively
- Acting out stories and scenarios also promotes literacy through speaking and listening, as well as interacting with different texts such as menus, lists, or charts
- Dramatic play encourages problem solving, conflict resolution, and emotional regulation to stay "in character" and play the role of someone else!



Halloween Animals: Make Your Own Nature Critters!



Try this "Cool Critters" activity from Environmental Education For Kids, and make Halloween animals using natural materials.



1 Have children pick out the natural materials they would like to use. Pinecones, acorns, and dried milkweed pods work well



2 Provide some craft materials such as clay, eyes, pipe cleaners, foam sticker shapes, or toothpicks



3 Let children choose what they would like to make! If you use hot glue, a grownup needs to help assemble the critter, but air dry clay and pipe cleaners work well, and children can use them more independently



Discuss owls, spiders, bats, and mice. Ask what these animals need to survive, where they live, and why they are common Halloween decorations.





CMNH Play Based Learning Tip 6

Questions to ask to encourage learning during play



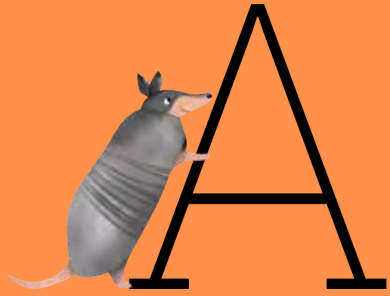
Children can learn from playing on their own, but with guidance from a teacher or caregiver, their play can lead to more specific outcomes or discoveries. Asking questions helps children to process what they are doing, and to think more deeply about problem solving. Here are some questions that can encourage learning during play:



- Pose a problem- "What would happen if....?"
- Make a leading statement- "Have you considered..."
- Clarify thinking- "Tell me what you are thinking"
- Ask "what?" and "how?"- "What are you making?" and "How did you make that?"
- Think of possibilities: "What would change if we..."
- Spark curiosity- "I wonder why..."



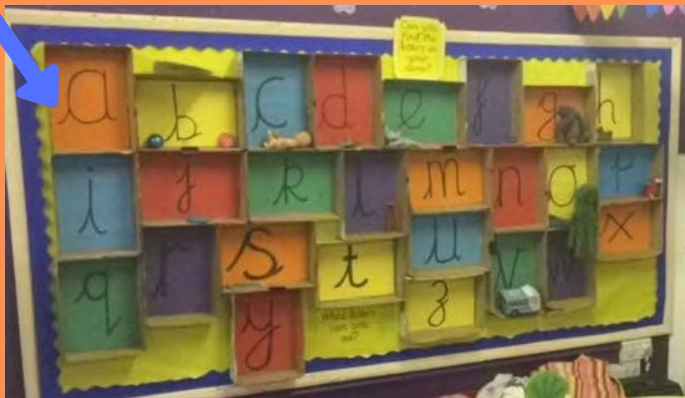
Play and Literacy: Make an Alphabet Museum



Try making an "alphabet museum" to display different objects that start with each letter of the alphabet. This is a great collaborative activity, and helps to build early literacy skills. Here are three ways to make an "alphabet museum," or go on an "ABC scavenger hunt!"



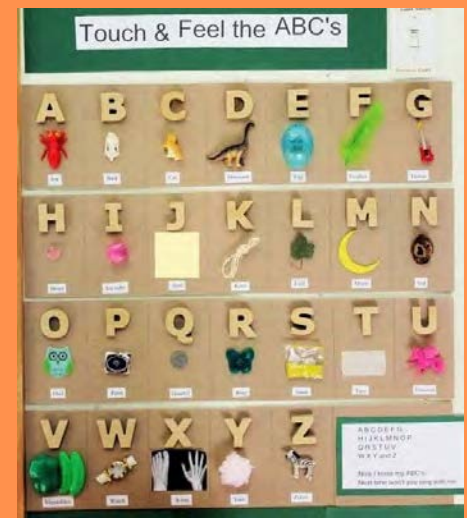
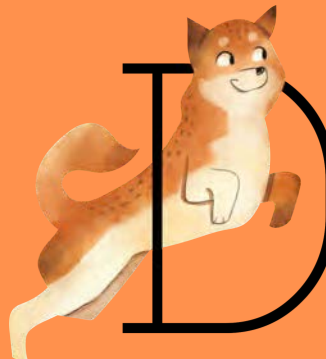
1 Use boxes to collect items, such as toys or pictures for each letter of the alphabet



2 Create a wall hanging with pockets, and collect small items in each pocket for each letter



3 Use magnets letters or blocks to collect one item for each letter, creating a smaller display



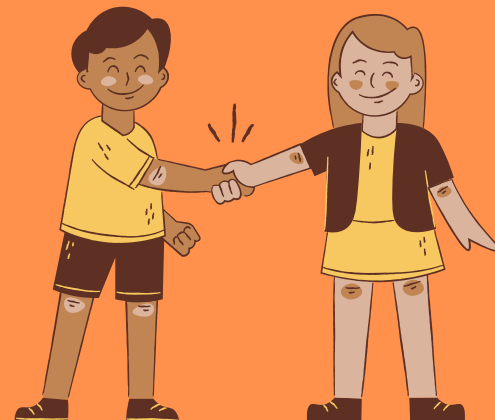


CMNH Play Based Learning Tip 7

Play encourages language skills!

A child's vocabulary grows exponentially in the early years of their lives.

- When children (and adults!) are interacting through play, they are introducing new words to each other.
- Adults can support language development through play by asking open-ended questions, encouraging children to talk together about their play, and introducing some new words.
- Rather than a vocabulary lesson, learning language through play is more natural and enjoyable since children are engaged in activities that interest them.



Play and Literacy: Letter Stamping in Cloud Dough

Try making "cloud dough" and using magnetic letters or stamps to work on letter recognition and practice making short words. Instead of pulling out the whole alphabet, select a few letters that children can make short words with! This cuts down on clean up time, and leaves more room on the tray for exploration and sensory play.

Cloud Dough Recipe:

-2 cups of flour

-1/4 cup of oil

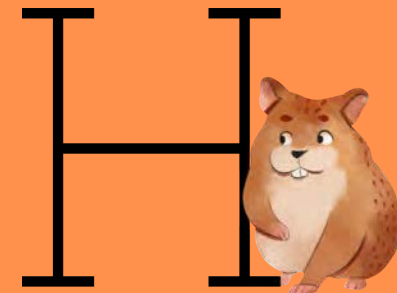
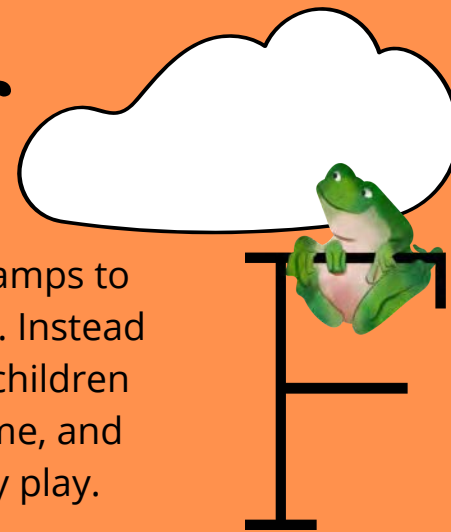
This makes the quantity shown below! You can cut the recipe in half to make a smaller amount

Making the Dough

This dough has a 1 to 8 ratio of flour to oil. Children can help with measuring and pouring. Add small toys or play dough tools for more sensory fun!

Clean Up

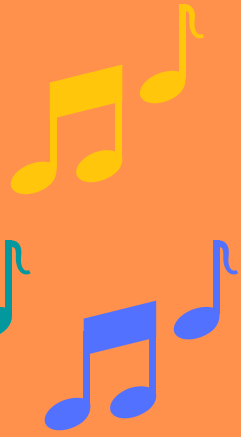
Use a tablecloth and tray for easier clean up! Children can help with washing tools and toys afterward. This dough can be stored in an airtight container and used again!





CMNH Play Based Learning Tip

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Play Supports Pre-Literacy!

Pre-literacy skills include print motivation, or interest in books, print awareness, such as noticing printed words and letters, and understanding that books are read from front to back, and that print goes from left to right on a page. Pre-literacy skills also include vocabulary, phonological awareness, letter recognition, and narrative skills. That's a lot to think about! Luckily, children can gain these pre-literacy skills from something they already love—play! This is evident especially when play involves music or rhythm.

- Children clapping or singing along with a song or dancing to a beat assists them with early reading skills.
- They are learning to differentiate sounds and syllables, playing with rhymes, and practicing memorization. All of these will be beneficial skills when they start learning to read.
- Playing pretend, or acting out stories helps children build narrative skills and vocabulary!



Seasonal Fun: Bean and Seed Mosaics

Trying making fun mosaics with beans, seeds, and dry leaves and sticks. For a fun seasonal project, try making a turkey! If you would like to add some literacy into the activity, try writing words or names for children to fill in with beans. These could make great place settings for a family meal! This activity is great for fine motor skills, and can be a good process art project, too!

Materials Needed:

- Thick paper or card stock
- Dried beans and seeds
- Liquid glue
- Optional: template to trace



Set up by placing the beans in small containers or an egg carton, and place the paper on a tray or sheet pan. If you would like to use a template, like the turkey drawing in the photo, do this step ahead of time with permanent marker, or let children draw what they would like! Children can add glue and place beans on the template, or anywhere they would like to make mosaic art!

