

Early Learning Parents' Pages

2016 As 2015 draws to an end, parents are encouraged to make a New Year's resolution to become more involved in their children's lives. Check out our [Pinterest](#) in January for ideas in becoming more involved in your child's activities and events.

Active Play is Important

As a child, most of your time was spent playing outdoors; yet, with today's influx of technology, it can prove overwhelming for parents to keep their children active. Parents should understand that remaining active is important both socially and physically.

Active play is extremely important for your child as they gain benefits such as increased muscle strength, coordination and bone density, in addition to a strong heart and development of gross motor skills.

Your child needs a balance of high-energy active play such as jumping, running and climbing with passive play such as sitting in a sandbox, playing with small toys or looking at books.

As a role model for your child, it's important to remain a part of his or her active play. Point out objects as you walk together to increase brain activity and physical activity. Can't find your way outside? Make a pillow fort in the living room and have your child use stuffed animals to climb around and through the fort.

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Holiday Family Traditions

With the holiday season in full swing, families are taking part in special holiday traditions such as baking, decorating and shopping. Yet, with so much happening throughout the season, it is important to remember to include the entire family as you celebrate; especially your children.

The holiday season is important for child growth and development; yet, if your child is too young to participate or has learning challenges, it can often prove difficult to include everyone in your celebration. To ensure your holidays go smoothly, find ways to make your traditions and events fun and meaningful for your child.

Think about your child's likes, dislikes and his or her attention span when planning activities. Ideas like stirring ingredients or decorating small areas of the house, can keep your child active and attentive to the task at hand.

If you're planning a trip to visit relatives, children with challenging social skills can become uncomfortable in various situations. Practice greeting family members and remind your child to look people in the face when speaking to them. When you have your child practice polite greetings and saying "thank you," you're helping him or her become more comfortable in social situations.

Typically with the holiday season, families will attend various special events or religious services. As these occasions approach, it's important to help your child understand what to expect. Many events and religious services offer children's services that are more tuned into a child's viewpoint or provide childcare during a special service. Performances such as plays and musicals can be entertaining for children, but it can prove difficult to keep them seated due to long show times.

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"Young children learn by doing, and active play includes both structured and unstructured activities."



Holiday Family Readiness...

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If your child has difficulty sitting still during a performance, bring quiet "fidget toys" to keep him or her occupied throughout the show.

Holiday events such as dinners at family and friends' homes can often cause stress because your child may not enjoy the food being served. Bringing some of your child's favorite snacks or a particular dinner item can serve as a great back up plan if he or she doesn't show an interest in the prepared food.



Sharing the holidays, different events and cherished traditions with your child will present him or her with a better understanding of what is truly important during the holiday season. Your child will value traditions and family over presents and toys if you start these teachings at a young age.

Remember, the traditions you value most as a family will be the ones that stick with you and your child during many holiday celebrations in the future.

Active Play...

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No matter which activity you choose, it is important you and your child remain active. With a baby, you can place him or her on a blanket for "[Tummy Time](#)" activities. These activities will help exercise your child's body parts and muscles, while presenting the freedom to move in a safe space.

Toddlers and preschoolers should have three to four hours of active play, which should take place throughout the entire day. The time you spend on different activities will promote good

health and a strong relationship between you and your child.

Check out these resources to learn more and find ways you and your child can enjoy active play together:

- [Active Play Everyday](#)
- [Early Childhood Movement Webinar](#)
- [Active Play and Physical Literacy](#)
- [Play and Children's Learning from NAEYC](#)

Bedtime Stories Help Build Young Brains

For years, bedtime stories have been a favorite past time for parents and grandparents alike. Now, various research shows that reading a bedtime story may be one of the most important parts of your child's nighttime routine.

As early as infancy, your child can benefit from hearing you or other family members read as you discuss the story and view pictures. During this time, you're not only bonding with your child, but also teaching him or her the basics of school readiness. Recent research shows the differences in brain activity related to how much children have been read to at home.

While children can benefit from having family members speak to them, books contain different words than those used in normal conversations. As you read a story to your child, he or she can better

connect words with pictures and will associate comfort with reading as he or she sits in your lap.



The bedtime story is not only a way to bond with your child, but also a great way to stimulate his or her brain and activate areas that will strengthen connections to future learning.

Set aside some time this holiday season and each night to activate your child's brain and prepare him or her for future learning.



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