

# All About Play!

This leaflet is for parents, carers or childminders of children who would like to know more about play. The leaflet explains why play is important, what you can do to support your child and where you can get more information and help. The leaflet also gives some practical ideas and explains more about Brentford Toy Library's services. If you would like any more information please come and ask at the Brentford Toy Library.

## Why is play important?

Play is one of the main ways for your child to have fun, relax and express themselves.

For babies and toddlers play is very important for exploring and understanding the world around them. As they are growing up children develop and learn through play. Play helps children with their thinking skills (learning and understanding), social skills, emotions and even their physical development.<sup>1</sup>

Your child might be playing with some wooden blocks. This might seem like a very simple game. While they are playing they are learning and developing in lots of ways.

### Social skills and emotions

Children will learn to play and interact with other children and adults, they will also like playing by themselves. While they are playing they might be trying out social skills like:

- having conversations
- sharing and taking turns
- making friends
- beginning to understand about emotions.

An example: While your child is playing with blocks they might let their brother or sister join in. They are finding out about sharing. You might say to your child 'well done, good sharing.' They are finding out about praise and feeling happy.

### Physical development

Children need to learn about how their bodies move and work. They need to develop skills in walking, running, balancing and moving their fingers to hold things. Play can help your child keep active and healthy.<sup>2</sup>

An example: while your child is playing with blocks they are using their eyes, hands and fingers to pick them up and build a tower. They are finding out about how to hold the bricks and put them in the right position.

### **Communication**

While your child is playing they may:

- Talking to other children and adults
- Learning the names of objects and actions
- Using other ways of communicating. For example eye-contact, hand gestures and listening skills

Including books and telling stories during play can also help your child's literacy (reading and writing) skills<sup>3</sup>

If you talk to your child while they are playing with the bricks they might be learning what 'brick' and 'build' mean.

### **Thinking skills**

As they grow up play is one way that children begin to learn about maths<sup>5</sup> and important ideas such as shapes, counting and solving problems.

Your child might be sorting bricks by size or colour. They might be looking at and feeling the bricks and thinking about how the bricks are different from one another.

### **What can I do?**

You can help create opportunities for your child to play. You can also give them a safe space, some interesting objects and time. Playing is also a great way to spend time with your child and you can make playing even more fun and interesting for them. There is not a right or wrong way to do things and not everyone feels comfortable at first. It is probably a long time since you have done any playing! Here are some tips that might help:

### **Toys**

Children do not need expensive toys to play. You could:

- Borrow toys from the Brentford Toy Library. Find out more on page x
- Buy toys from charity shops or jumble sales. Check they are safe, not broken and give them a wash first.
- Swap toys with friends and family. They might have toys and games their children have grown out of.

- Use objects from around your house. For example, pots and pans, boxes, empty food containers and old clothes all make good toys.

The types of toys and games your child play will change as they grow. Keep an eye out for what they are interested in.

### **Joining in**

When you do play with your child, it is a good idea to let them 'lead the way' and decide what they will play, what they will do next and when they want to stop. Try and get a balance between joining in and letting your child play by themselves or with other children.

You could join in by:

**Playing alongside them.** For example, if they are building a brick tower you could build one next to it.

**Taking-turns.** For example, your child could put one brick on the tower and then let you have a go.

**Having a chat.** Joining in can be a good time to talk to your child and talk about what they are playing.

You could try:

- Commenting on what they are doing. For example 'you are building a big tower.' Asking less questions and making more comments sometimes actually encourages children to join in and say more.<sup>4</sup>
- Add more information to what they are saying, if your child says 'brick' you could say 'red brick.'
- Praise. For example letting them know they are doing well: 'Well done! You built that carefully.'

### **Spaces to play**

Playing outdoors as well as indoors is really important. Being outdoors it will give your child a space to explore, try things out, move and be active.<sup>5</sup>

#### **Ideas:**

If you do not have garden, find out what parks, playgrounds or other green areas you have nearby. You could ask at your local library or use the internet to search.

Your child could play ball-games, walk or run around, explore trees, plants and insects that are around them.

It is important to keep them safe and stay nearby, but also let them try new things out and explore.

There might be a play scheme or after school club that organises outdoor play near you. See page x for more information

## Ideas for play

It is good for children to try different activities and play with different toys and objects. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Type of game	Objects you could use	Things to try
<p><b>Wet play</b> Exploring their senses: touch, sight, sound</p>	<p>Bowl of water cups Straws Plastic toys</p>	<p>Give your child some time to play with the water.</p> <p>They could: Pour it out using cups Wash their toys Blow bubbles with straws Splash around a bit!</p> <p>Talk about how the water feels and sounds. You could use words like: <i>wet, splash, squirt, wash and pour.</i></p>
<p><b>Real life play</b> Understanding real-life and using their imagination</p>	<p>Empty food packets Real or toy money A shopping bag</p>	<p>Your child could set up a pretend shop. They could choose packets for their dinner and pretend to buy them.</p> <p>Talk about their favourite foods. Use words like: <i>buy, shop, money, eat.</i></p>
<p><b>Story play</b> Using talking and listening skills. Starting to understand about books and stories</p>	<p>A simple picture book from the library Somewhere comfy to sit!</p>	<p>Look through each picture and take it in turns to talk about what is happening.</p> <p>Your child could also use puppets and toys to act out the story.</p> <p>If your child cannot think of anything try asking a few questions, for example '<i>what do you think is happening here?</i>'</p>

## How can Brentford Toy Library help?

Brentford Toy Library provides a safe, child-centred, spacious, play setting. Children are free to run, jump, play and express themselves. Playing together, sharing toys and activities.

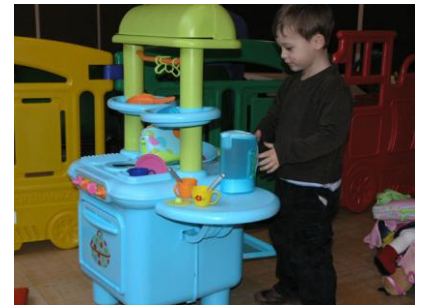
Parents and carers of under 5's find the Brentford Toy Library a good meeting place where ideas and even problems can be shared over a cup of tea.

Membership and entrance is free for everyone.

- The Toy Library has lots of toys for children to play with.
- They have 'play sessions' 2 times a week.
- They have toys and equipment for children with special needs.
- For a small price you can borrow the toys to play with at home.

Other services that the Brentford Toy Library provides:

- A chance for parents, carers and childminders to meet and chat.
- Support and advice from local health workers.
- Workshops to learn more about child development



## Contact Us

### Brentford Toy Library

St Paul's Parish Centre  
St Pauls Road  
Brentford  
Middlesex TW8 0PN

Entrance is through the carport to the right of the main building entrance.

### Telephone

07510 346 513

### Email

[info@brentfordtoylibrary.org.uk](mailto:info@brentfordtoylibrary.org.uk)



## Opening Hours

### Tuesday & Thursday

10:00 am - 12:00 noon

### Friday

1:30pm - 3:30 pm

---

<sup>1</sup> Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage Setting the Standards for Learning, Development and Care for children from birth to five. May 2008 Department for children, schools and families.

<sup>2</sup> Planning for Play: Guidance on the development and implementation of a local play strategy. 2006 National Children's Bureau / Big Lottery Fund

<sup>3</sup> Saracho O N, Spodek B. A play foundation for family literacy. International journal of education research. 1998: 29 (1) 41-50 (1998)

<sup>4</sup> Dockrell J, Sylva K, Huxford L, Roberts F. Oral language skills in the early years 2007 Oxford University  
[http://www.ican.org.uk/early%20talk/what%20is%20early%20talk/~/\\_media/ICAN%20website/4%20Early%20Talk/Research/ET%20research%20Oral%20language%20skills.ashx](http://www.ican.org.uk/early%20talk/what%20is%20early%20talk/~/_media/ICAN%20website/4%20Early%20Talk/Research/ET%20research%20Oral%20language%20skills.ashx)

<sup>5</sup> Evangelou M, Sylva K, Kyriacou M. Early Years Learning and Development Literature Review .2009 University of Oxford