



THE **CAREGIVER** GUIDE



Developing Through Play

Children are raised in a world of unknowns. In their early years, play helps them develop skills to prepare for those unknowns in the future. From birth to 3 is the most important time for brain development; through trying, failing and trying again, through building and knocking down and through playful exchanges with caregivers, siblings and playmates, children learn.

They learn boundaries, self-expression, confidence, resilience and communication skills to name a few.





It's amazing how many **important and complex skills** are built through play.

Emotional skills

During hide and seek, children experience excitement, surprise and learn trust (they don't doubt they'll be found!). In games with mirrors, they learn self-awareness.

These are emotional skills; which lead to greater happiness, security and ability to cope in difficult situations.

Cognitive skills

Think about puzzles, mazes, memory games and incomplete drawings. Puzzles develop problem-solving skills. Memory games train the memory, and they need to plan and imagine something that isn't there to finish a drawing. Very complex!

Cognitive skills are how we learn to learn.

Creative skills

When coloring on a blank page, molding with clay, or building with blocks children are exercising their imagination and finding ways to express themselves.

Having strong creative skills means coming up with new ideas for the challenges they face.

Physical skills

Pretending to be an animal, jumping, clapping, turning, and standing on one leg like a bird are fun and build muscle strength, coordination, and balance.

Being able to do things creates confidence, joy, and satisfaction.

Social skills

Children learn sharing and cooperating when taking turns. A make-believe tea party builds thoughtfulness and communication as they serve and receive.

Well-developed social skills allow us to have healthy relationships with family and friends, an important source of happiness.

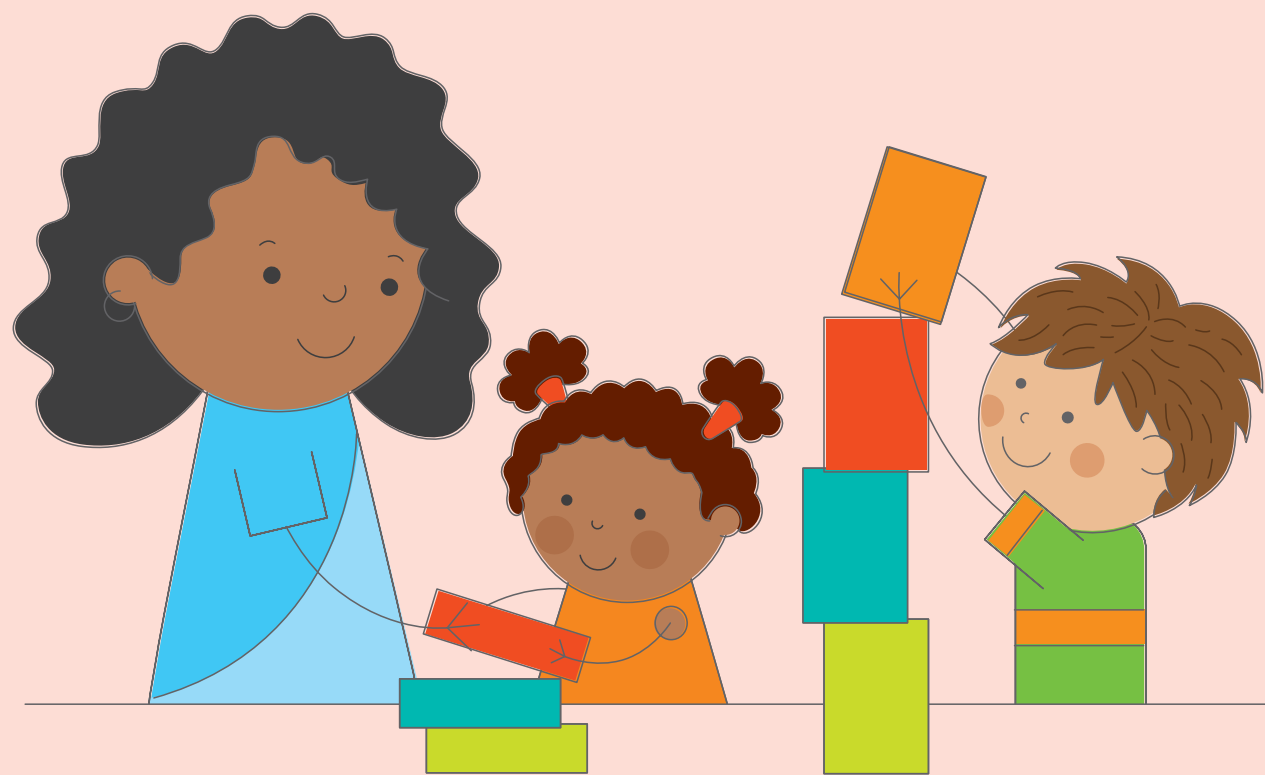




Embrace Play Anytime & Anywhere.

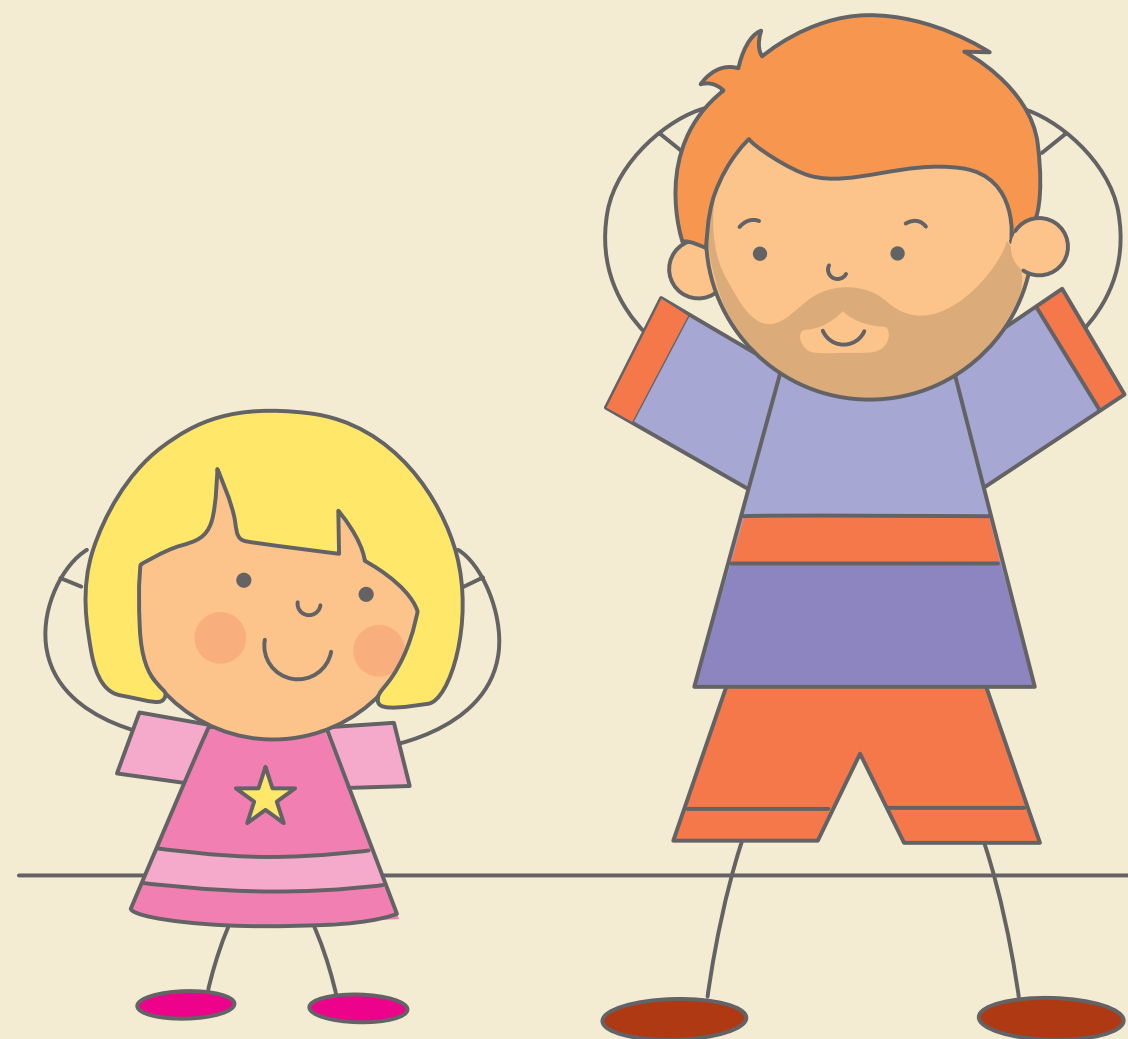
We're all busy, but lucky for you, play is fun, and responsible for a huge part of your child's development. So, take 5-minute play breaks 3 times a day to fit some happiness into your schedule. No need for expensive toys or a lot of space, just make time and have fun.

Here are some great ways to fit little moments of play into your day...



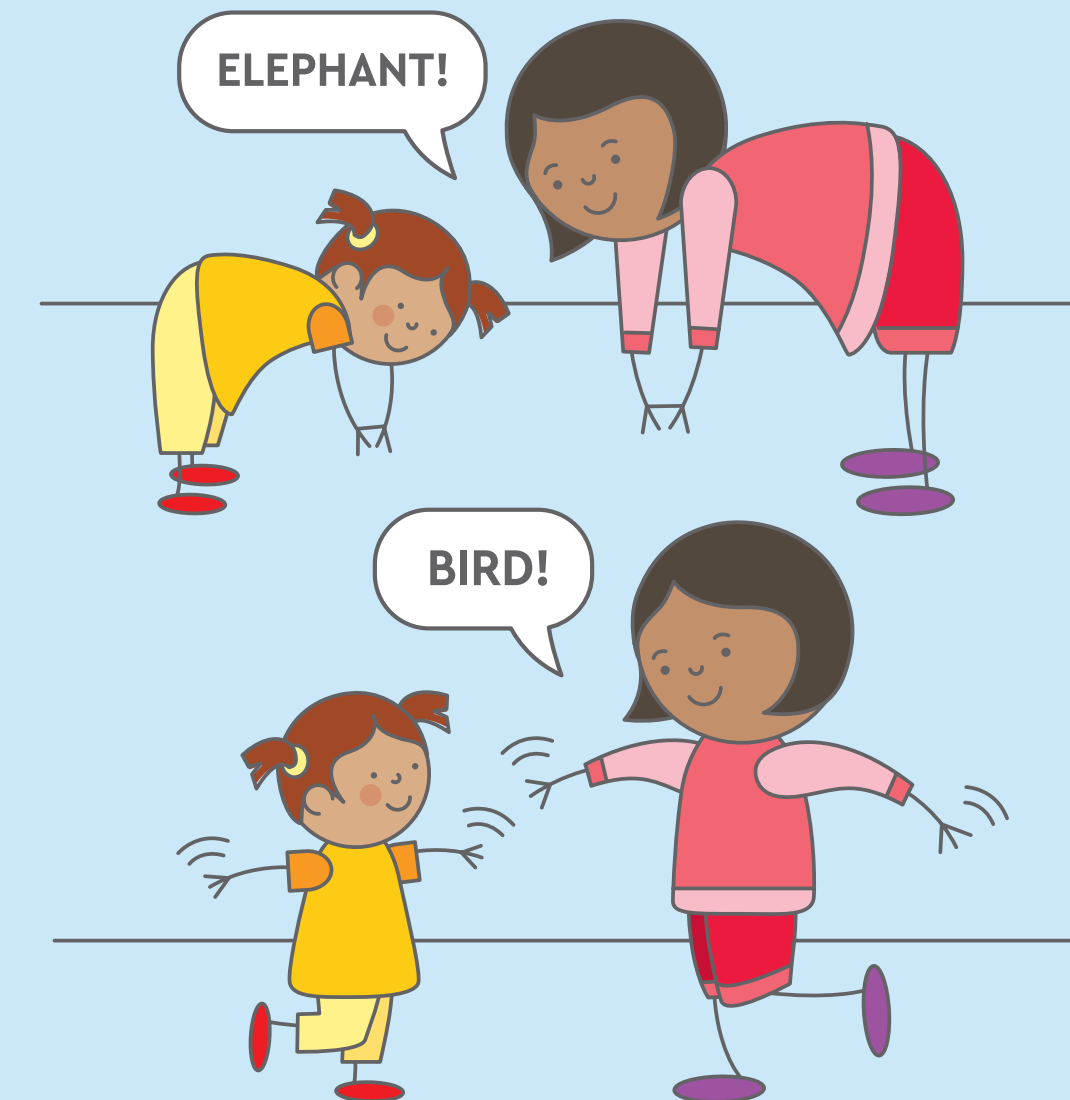
BUILD IN THE MORNING!

- 1** Make a tower. Use what's close.
.....
- 2** Invite them to add to it.
.....
- 3** Now knock it over and start again!



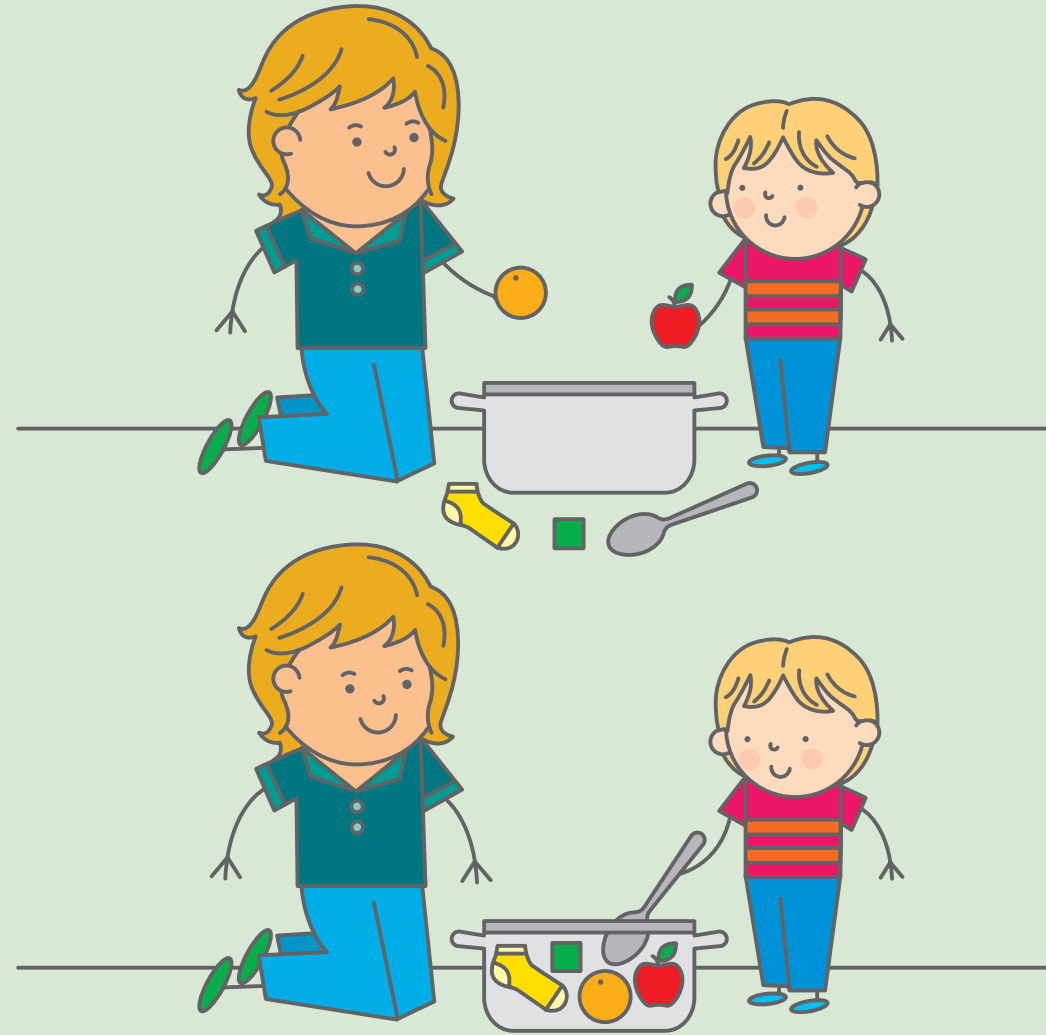
LET'S MIRROR AT LUNCH!

- 1** Take a big bite, now cover your nose with your spoon.
.....
- 2** Tap the table with one finger, then take a small bite.
.....
- 3** See what they can do!
Let them go first and you mirror.



ANIMAL AROUND ANYTIME!

- 1** Ask them to fly - be a bird!
.....
- 2** Now walk heavy like an elephant!
.....
- 3** Ruff-ruff. Have them guess what you are now.



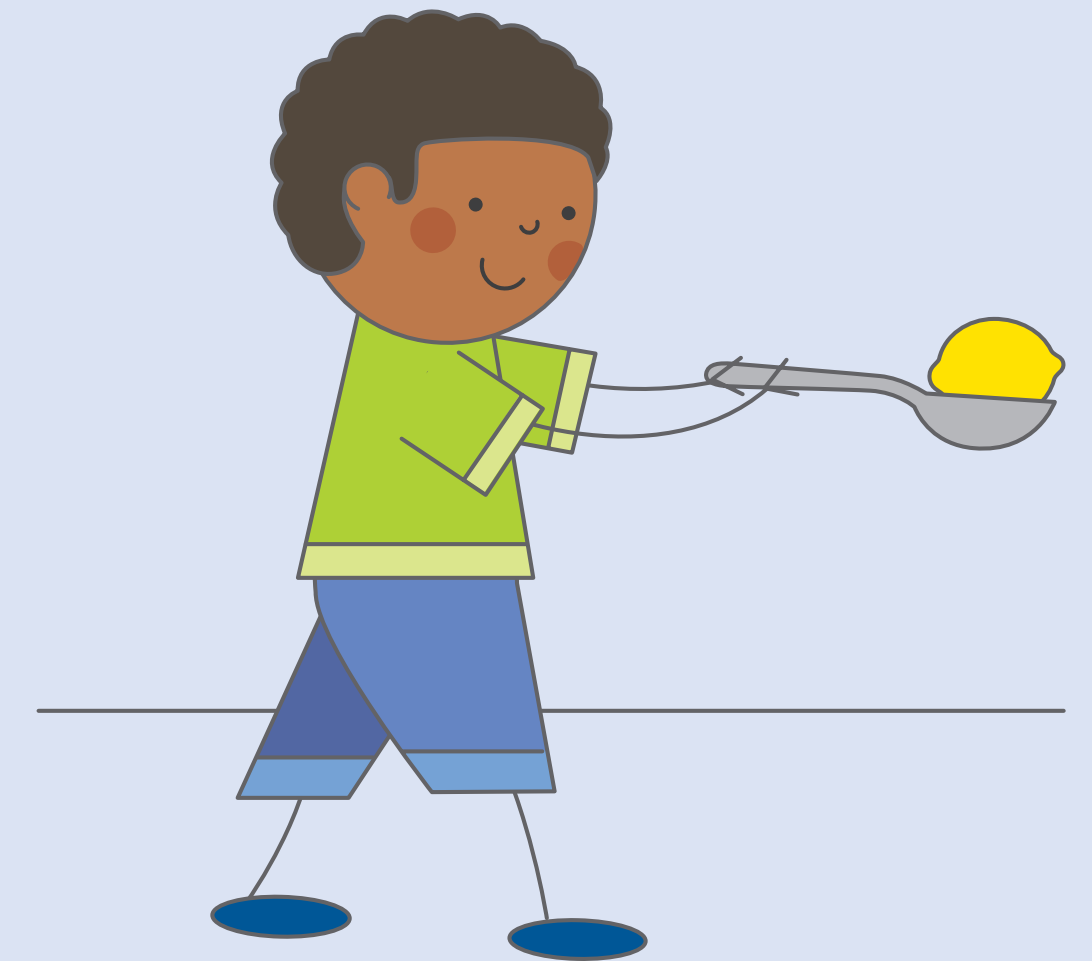
MAKE SOUP FOR DINNER!

- 1** While you cook, make "soup" with anything!
.....
- 2** A toy, a sock – you name it!
.....
- 3** Build memory skills – ask them to put ingredients back afterwards.



AFTER DINNER BAND!

- 1** Fill an empty plastic bottle with some rice. Fill another bottle with some dried beans. Close both tightly.
.....
- 2** Shake, shake, shake!
.....
- 3** Hey, we can play drums, too!



1...2...3...

BALANCE BEFORE BED!

- 1** Give them a serving spoon and a lemon and see how far they can get.
.....
- 2** Great job! Now try it with different objects.
.....
- 3** This is best suited for the 24 – 36-month-old.



More ideas



Play hide and seek at breakfast.

Put a Cheerio or nearby toy under one of two opaque cups. Have them find it. Introduce new objects and more cups as they grow. Now let them try.

Seek treasure on your travels.

What is your toddler pointing at out the window? Name it. What else do you see?

Play bedtime games.

Play hide and seek with their clothes while getting them undressed. Where's the shoe? Where's the t-shirt?





Keep Play FUN!

Whether it's free play, guided play, or games with a learning goal, follow their lead.

Play along, give encouragement, show interest, and help if you see them getting frustrated, but they get more out of play when they're in control.

Just remember, there is no right or wrong way to play. If the activity keeps their attention, they're learning! When they lose interest, switch it up!