

67,000 Pediatricians.  
Millions of Families.  
**A REVOLUTION**  
*in* **PLAY!**



**POWER**  
*of*  
**PLAY**

[MelissaAndDoug.com/PowerOfPlay](http://MelissaAndDoug.com/PowerOfPlay)

# The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) announces new alliance partnering with Melissa & Doug to improve the health and well-being of all children

*The AAP, an organization of 67,000 pediatricians, is joining forces with Melissa & Doug, the trusted toy company, to champion the health benefits of open-ended play, and provide tools and resources for parents to make it an essential part of children's everyday lives*

**(ITASCA, IL – February 19, 2020)** – The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has chosen Melissa & Doug, the toy company known for its 30-year commitment to open-ended play, to work together in a nationwide, multi-year undertaking. The alliance, called the “Power of Play,” will support parents and caregivers in helping children build important life skills through play, manage screen time, and connect with others on a deeper level.

The alliance is built on the findings that play is essential for healthy growth and development. And as with food, play has healthy and less healthy options, which contribute to children's well-being. Just as parents strive to make nutritious food choices for children, they should choose the types of play that research has demonstrated to encourage hands-on engagement, foster social interactions, and nurture imagination.

In recent years, the AAP has published a series of policy statements that highlight the powerful role of play in children's cognitive and social development, including recommendations that pediatricians write a “prescription for play,” and guide parents in setting limits around their children's use of digital media. In a 2019 policy statement on choosing toys for young children, the AAP recommends caregivers choose more traditional toys to facilitate children's cognitive brain development and foster language-building caregiver interactions.

The goal of the Power of Play alliance is to educate parents, caregivers, and professionals on the importance of these three principles to improve children's health and well-being: (see p. 4 for more details on these principles)

1. **Prioritize hands-on play**
2. **Enjoy screen-free time**
3. **Interact & connect through play**

Since its founding 90 years ago, the American Academy of Pediatrics has been a champion for children, including promoting ways to nurture the strong parent-child relationships that are critical for early brain development.

“As a pediatrician, I know how essential creative, open-ended play is for young children's brain development, language acquisition, problem-solving skills, social interactions and physical activity,” said AAP President Sally Goza, MD, FAAP. “When children and parents play together, that's when we see those magical moments that are so important for children's growth. We are so pleased to be embarking on this new alliance with Melissa & Doug. Together we can help millions of families understand what they can do in terms of play to foster the best health outcomes for their kids.”

“In today's fast-paced world, so many of us are grappling with how to navigate our family's relationship to digital devices, manage media consumption, and find time to forge meaningful connections with one another”

For Melissa & Doug, the alliance offers an opportunity to share the science behind the benefits of play. Melissa & Doug is the only major toy brand to have never added apps or screens to its products. The company also has never advertised its products to children.

“In today's fast-paced world, so many of us are grappling with how to navigate our family's relationship to digital devices, manage media consumption, and find time to forge meaningful connections with one another,” says Melissa Bernstein, co-founder with husband, Doug Bernstein, of their namesake company, and a mother of six.

“There's a sense that childhood has changed over the last decade – with less time and space for kids to just be kids. Couple that with research showing how tech may be rewiring our brains and reports about rising rates of anxiety and depression in young people, and it's easy to see why parents are looking for answers. We have the opportunity to help people radically rethink the way we approach childhood and play. I'm incredibly excited to be partnering with the AAP to help parents, teachers, and caregivers embrace the power of play.”



# PROUDLY PARTNERING

*with the American  
Academy of Pediatrics*  
to foster early brain development



The Power of Play will offer practical ideas to parents, caregivers, and professionals who work with children. Some highlights:

**Proven play advice**, resources, and messaging for parents on how to inject play into children's lives – online in social media and videos, in toy stores – based on science, and translated into action-oriented tips easy to put into practice

**Developmental guides** of play-based solutions to common childhood concerns (managing big feelings, making friends, paying attention, etc.)

**"Play to the Rescue"** ideas for avoiding the tempting tech trap of handing over a phone or tablet to a child at restaurants, in cars, on bad-weather days, and during everyday errands and routines

Through this alliance, Melissa & Doug and the AAP are working together to educate parents and caregivers to recognize the scientific importance of play not focused on performance or outcomes; to embrace boredom as a catalyst for creative thinking; to adopt the idea of playfulness as a mindset useful for better understanding a child; and to learn how play can help children work through difficult emotional moments, become better problem solvers and more resilient, all while lowering parents' stress levels.

## Related Research

"Media & Young Minds,"

The American Academy of Pediatrics (November 2016)

"The Power of Play: A Pediatric Role in Enhancing Development in Young Children"

The American Academy of Pediatrics (September 2018)

"Selecting Appropriate Toys for Young Children in the Digital Era"

The American Academy of Pediatrics (January 2019)

## About the AAP

The American Academy of Pediatrics is an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults. For more information, visit [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) and follow us on Twitter @AmerAcadPeds.

## About Melissa & Doug

From classic wooden toys to crafts, pretend play, and games, Melissa & Doug products provide a launch pad to ignite imagination and a sense of wonder in all children so they can discover themselves, their passions, and their purpose. According to NBC News, "The [Melissa & Doug] brand of low-tech, mostly wood toys has become the gold standard in early childhood play."

## PRESS CONTACT:

PR@MelissaAndDoug.com  
203-762-4500

# 3 PRINCIPLES of healthy PLAY

In recent years, the AAP has released several policy statements addressing children's digital media use, the importance of play, and recommendations for the best toys to support children's growth and development.

Below is a summary of their findings, as well as links to the research and actions you can take today.

## 1 Prioritize HANDS-ON play

Play is essential when it comes to children's health and development. Look for toys that inspire imaginative, open-ended thinking, and can be used in different ways to grow with children.



## 2 Enjoy SCREEN-FREE time

Limit screen time to no more than 1 hour per day of high-quality programming for children ages 2-5. For children younger than 2, media use should be very limited. It's best when an adult is standing by to co-view, talk, and teach.

## 3 INTERACT & CONNECT through play

Children learn best from parents and other caregivers. Use play as an opportunity to talk, read, and sing with children, all of which will build their vocabularies, reduce stress, create connection, and develop foundational skills for learning.





“High-quality toys in each of these categories can facilitate caregiver-child interactions, peer play, and the growth of imagination.”

—The American Academy of Pediatrics



### Pretend Play

Imaginative play promotes language and social-emotional development



Dolls



Activity Centers



Play Food



### Problem Solving

Problem solving play encourages logical thinking, goal setting, and patience



Puzzles



Construction Play



Blocks



### Developmental Play

Exploratory play hones fine and gross motor skills



Manipulatives



Activity Stations



Sorters & Stackers



### Arts & Creativity

Art projects boost creativity and fine motor skills



Craft Kits



Coloring Activities



Painting & Drawing



### Language & Concepts

Letter play advances sight-reading, vocabulary, and spelling skills



Alphabet Activities



Number Activities



Games



### Physical Activity

Active play develops coordination and social skills



Balls



Tunnels



Gardening & Nature



# Melissa Bernstein

Co-Founder and Chief  
Creative Officer of  
Melissa & Doug

As a founder of a toy company committed to championing open-ended, healthy play and as a mother of six who had two children in her 20s, two in her 30s, and two in her 40s, Melissa has had a front-row seat to the dramatic changes in the way kids play and experience childhood. She is dedicated to speaking out about the crisis our children face due to the rise of technology and other societal factors and providing solutions to help families find time for child-led play and exploration.



30  
years

**30 Years of Inspiring Kids:** It all started in 1988 with a girl, a boy, and a dream to create meaningful products that would inspire kids to discover themselves, their passions, and their purpose! Today, Melissa & Doug is proudly partnering with the American Academy of Pediatrics to foster early brain development with its Power of Play alliance ([MelissaAndDoug.com/PowerOfPlay](http://MelissaAndDoug.com/PowerOfPlay)).

#1

**#1 Parent-Recommended for Creativity & Learning:** With more than 100,000 5-star reviews, Melissa & Doug is the top toy brand parents tell others about and the brand most associated with creativity and learning (Stirling Associates, 2017).

2000+  
TOYS

**2,000+ Toys, Books & Children's Products:** Best known for wooden toys and realistic pretend play sets, Melissa & Doug also makes books, furniture, arts & crafts, puzzles, and baby toys.

Attention  
to Detail

**Known for Attention to Detail:** The Melissa & Doug Giant White Tiger is so life-like that it was once placed outside and mistaken for a real tiger! Helicopters were even called in to track it.

40,000  
Schools

**Found in 40,000 Schools:** Recognized for its skill-building products that make learning fun, Melissa & Doug can be found in more than 40,000 schools, preschools, and daycare centers.

10 Fun  
Facts

100%  
SCREEN-FREE

**Only Major Toy Brand to Stay 100% Screen- and App-Free:** Melissa & Doug ignored the toy industry's rush to introduce digital toys and apps, holding firm to the belief that engaging, screen-free products would best encourage imagination and interaction.

Trusted by  
60 Million  
Families

**Trusted by 60 Million in More Than 130 Countries:** Melissa & Doug products are rigorously tested to meet the highest quality standards. Its award-winning products are available worldwide and are designed in-house at its Wilton, Connecticut, headquarters.

Word of Mouth  
LOVE

**No Advertising to Kids – Ever:** Melissa & Doug grew as a company thanks to word-of-mouth love from parents, caregivers, educators, and kids.

REAL  
PEOPLE

**Melissa and Doug Are Real People:** And parents of six! An advocate for child-led play, Melissa has appeared on the Today Show, GMA, her Living Playfully podcast, and in front of audiences across the country, speaking about the play crisis and providing solutions to help families find time for exploration and discovery.

“The Gold Standard  
IN CHILDHOOD PLAY”

**What People Are Saying:** According to NBC News, “The [Melissa & Doug] brand of low-tech, mostly wood toys has become the gold standard in early childhood play.”



# WHAT'S *next*

Here's a sneak peek at what we are planning!

## **"Play to the Rescue" Ideas**

Tips for avoiding the tempting tech trap of handing over a phone or tablet to a child at restaurants, in cars, on bad-weather days, and during everyday errands and routines

## **Developmental Guides**

Play-based solutions to common childhood concerns (managing big feelings, making friends, paying attention, etc.)

## **Proven Play Advice**

Resources and action-oriented tips for parents on how to inject play into children's lives and the science behind why it's beneficial



with Melissa and Dr. Jenny



This podcast, hosted by Melissa and Dr. Jenny Radesky, a developmental behavioral pediatrician, offers practical advice and solutions to common parenting concerns



# Join us *as we share the* **POWER of PLAY** *with the world.*

Sign up online to get the latest on our Power of Play initiatives.

Still reading? **It's time to go play!** You got this!

