

Q&A HOW TO CREATE QUALITY PLAY EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN.



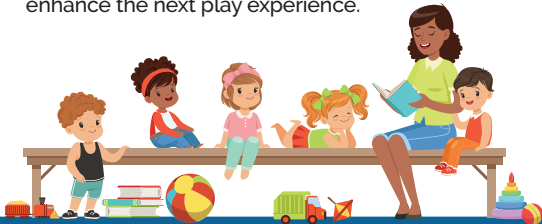
FOR EDUCATORS

Q What should teachers bear in mind when planning play experiences for children?

Children are curious by nature. If we want to see children motivated, taking initiative and learning independently, the play experiences should focus and build on the children's interest. This will allow children to explore, plan, communicate, try out ideas and problem-solve, just to name a few.

The teacher multi-tasks and plays different roles at various times — as a materials provider, co-player, instructor, guide and supporter. To provide a meaningful play experience, the teacher should:

- Provide open-ended and age-appropriate materials.
- Give clear and age-appropriate instructions.
- Choose a suitable space and allow sufficient time.
- Ensure the group size is appropriate.
- Encourage children to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Observe and record how children interact with materials and their peers to plan and enhance the next play experience.



TAN BENG LUAN is the founder and Principal of Creative O Preschoolers' Bay, and an ECDA Fellow who mentors EC professionals and develops sector-wide resources. A champion of multi-culturalism in early childhood education, she believes in guiding children in forming a positive attitude towards people and the environment.

Q How beneficial are playdates and how should I go about planning one for my toddler?

Playdates provide an environment for social learning. Your child will learn about sharing, communicating, interacting and imagining, and even problem solving. Playdates are also opportunities for parents to meet up, receive emotional support from one another and alleviate the stress of parenting.

Here are some tips on how to get the most out of a playdate:

- **Have a mix of outdoor and indoor activities.** Think about fun activities e.g. an outdoor picnic or playing with balls in the park. Active play helps toddlers in their physical development. Playdates should not involve screen time.
- **Don't overly structure play activities.** Provide toys and suggest activities but let children choose what and how they want to play. Adults can come in to "scaffold" or lend a hand when children have conflicts. Affirm good behaviour frequently.
- **Ensure a safe environment.** Without adequate adult supervision, playdates should not involve water activities near a pool or potentially dangerous toys. There needs to be visual supervision at all times.
- **Keep the group small and manageable.** A playdate should not result in child-minding or behaviour challenges. With toddlers, prepare for more adults to be around to provide supervision at all times.
- **Playdates should not be too long.** Aim for 1 to 2 hours for toddlers and 2 to 3 hours for preschoolers. Include snack times in between play.



FOR PARENTS



DR CHONG SHANG CHEE is a Senior Consultant and Head of the Child Development Unit, National University Hospital. A mother of two, she has been a paediatrician for 18 years. She is also active in advocacy and policy work especially in the area of children with special needs.