

The Top 10 Ways You Can Help Your Children Learn Through Play

10. Children need to draw, scribble, and scrawl to understand how we can represent ideas in writing and pictures. Sidewalk chalk will let their imaginations run wild and keep them busy for hours. Ask them to describe what they have created and you develop language skills, too.
9. Young children love the power of a flashlight. Buy one designated for your child and have them lead YOU around the neighborhood at night looking at bugs in the cracks in the sidewalk, finding animals in trees, and reading house numbers. Kids love to be in charge of the adults and without even realizing it, they are learning about nature and numbers.
8. Build with your children using blocks or help them solve jigsaw puzzles. Without thinking about it, you will use lots of spatial language like "under" and "next to" that your child needs to hear for success in the STEM disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math.
7. Go to the Delaware Children's Museum and play alongside your children. Don't forget to discuss your visit after! Research shows that kids retain more information about what they learned when you discuss it with them.
6. Bake cookies or a cake and ask your child to help you to retrieve the ingredients, read the recipe with you (if they can read), and measure out the ingredients. Language, communication, and math skills are built in just this way.
5. Don't underestimate old favorites like "Simon Says" and "Red Light, Green Light." These games build self-control and "executive function" skills. Children have to learn how to *inhibit* their behavior and follow directions.
4. Play with story stems using the computer. Start a story like, "Once upon a time, there lived a giant spider who..." and have everyone in the room add another line to it and then read it out loud when finished. Developing language skills and creativity was never more fun!
3. Go to the doctor's office and bring a crayon. Trace your children's bodies on the white paper that covers the examining table. Bring the paper home and have them fill in the figure including (if they wish) drawings of some of their organs. Have them put a face on the figure, doing a self-portrait. Biology is never more fun than when it's about me!
2. Act out! Assemble some old and interesting dress-up clothes. Hats, capes, mustaches, and mock swords are always favorites! Invite some other kids over. You'll be surprised that even older children will want to create

scenarios that they can act out together for your benefit. This builds collaboration, communication, creativity, and confidence.

1. Want even more ideas?! Bring your children to the **ULTIMATE BLOCK PARTY** on October 3, 2010, in Central Park in New York City. Sponsored by private corporations, children's museums, and government agencies, it is designed to share the importance of playful learning with families through fun events and activities.

Roberta Golinkoff Biography

Roberta Golinkoff holds an H. Rodney Sharp Chair in the College of Education and Human Development and joint appointments in the Departments of Psychology and Linguistics. An author of twelve books and numerous professional articles, she founded and directs the Infant Language Project (<http://www.udel.edu/ILP>), whose goal it is to understand how children tackle the amazing feat of learning language. Within the past year, Golinkoff and her long-time collaborator Hirsh-Pasek received the American Psychological Association (APA) Award for Distinguished Service to Psychological Science and the Urie Bronfenbrenner Award for Lifetime Contribution to Developmental Psychology in the Service of Science and Society. Golinkoff's most recent book is entitled, *A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool: Presenting the Evidence*.