



Exploring

infants and toddlers



Capital District
Child Care Council

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 2

Wonderful Water Play

4 Ways You Can Make A Fun Activity Meaningful

When it comes to play, many children are open to wet and watery opportunities. A sink with running water is fascinating to busy toddlers even when they aren't washing their hands. There is no right or wrong way to play with water. It is an affordable, relaxing form of play that appeals to every age learner. It allows them to clear their minds, to be free and formless in their ideas as they play. When children put water in a cup, it takes the shape of a cup. They love the sounds made as they "glug" water out of an emptying bottle. Water can drip, flow, pour or splash. It can be warm, cold or come in the changing form of a slippery melting ice cube. The benefits of water play for young children are endless.

When children enjoy water play they may discover:

- Science & math skills: shapes, empty/full, ½ full/ ½ empty, before/after, heavy/light, warm/cold, liquid/solid, wet/dry
- Fine motor skills: holding tight to something slippery, using tongs, nets, scoops, funnels, basters, squeeze, squirt
- Coordination skills: eye hand/ two handed work/ full pour or drip
- Language skills: full, empty, pour, drip, spill, squirt, float, sink.....
- Social skills: by playing together children can imitate others, use their imaginations, make new friends, help friends, share materials and ideas with friends, learn new things about their friends, learn positive water play behaviors

The role of the adult during water play is to:

1. Provide children with "green light" materials that can be fully explored with a minimum of interruption
2. Talk with children and ask simple questions as they play
3. Model positive water play behaviors and language as children play and work out conflicts.
4. Support children's learning by helping them add to what they already know about water and supplying varied experiences involving water and additional items requested by children as they play when possible.

***Water play materials must be cleaned regularly to prevent germs that can grow in warm, wet places. Children should wash their hands before playing with water. Water should be changed daily or as needed per use. Water table should be washed with soap and water and then sanitized as well as toys, giving special attention to toys that may hold water inside until squeezed out. Items should be allowed to air dry before they are used again.*



The best water play happens with the simplest of materials

Learning Through Water Play, National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 1997

Water, water everywhere by Rusty Keeler, Child Care Exchange, 2004

Water-based Learning Units by Sheila Milnes, Better Kid Care, Penn. State University Cooperative Extension Program

For more information call 518 426-7181

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