

Activities for Preschoolers: The Best Educational Toys for Preschoolers

Today's children have almost numberless choices when it comes to toys. Many of these toys are slickly marketed as "educational," but how educational are they, really? It can be difficult to separate the hype from reality, but here's one quick test to determine if a children's toy has value: who or what is working harder, the toy or the child?

Toys that beep, buzz, light up or come with a predetermined, limited purpose generally fall into the first category. They may seem educational, especially if they spew academic facts, yet they generally don't inspire any true learning or creativity because they're doing all or most of the work. Children become passive consumers, rather than active creators.

Although technology has changed many aspects of modern life, children's needs haven't changed. Children need opportunities for authentic, creative, open-ended play experiences. High-quality, age-appropriate toys can support those needs. Here are a few suggestions on which types of educational toys best support child development.

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See also:

- [Educational Toys and Books for Babies](#)
- [Educational Toys and Books for Toddlers/Twos](#)
- [Kids and Advertising: I Want That and That and That](#)



FROM THE WEB

10 Common Childhood Illnesses and Their Treatments

(American Academy of Pediatrics)

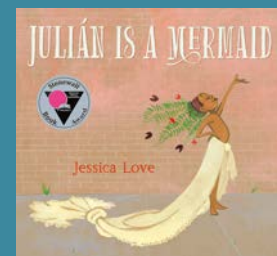
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Information regarding recalls issued by the Consumer Product Safety Commission
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Growing Readers



Written and Illustrated by Jessica Love

This beautifully diverse book features a young Spanish boy named Julián who has visions of being a mermaid. He is uncertain of how his Abuela (grandmother) will react if she finds out how he feels, so he hides the fact that he secretly wants to dress in a mermaid costume he created. This is a story of inclusion, acceptance, love, and the ability to be who you are and find comfort in it.

[Check out the current issue of the Bright Horizons Growing Readers Review.](#)

November 11 – 15 was our Community of Cultures week.

Here are some of the ways we celebrated the cultural diversity of the families at our center.



Infants

A parent in our Infant program shared a little of their family's Russian culture with the children. She shared a traditional Matryoshka - a Russian nesting doll. The infants explored the nesting doll and pulled apart each layer to discover another smaller doll inside.



Toddlers

The toddlers explored their differences and similarities by looking at their All About Me books. The children identified themselves and various members of their families and friends. Together they talked about the ways they were alike and different.



Twos

In the Twos classroom, a parent shared a little of their English culture. Using Paddington Bear (an English icon!) they read books about the bear's life in England, learning a little about the country as well.



Preschool

Some families opted to share family traditions and favorite activities. In the Preschool class, one family share some of their favorite books that they read at home.



Kindergarten Prep

Indian culture was a topic in the Kindergarten Prep class during this week. One mom came in to share various clothing items, traditional instruments, and books written in Hindi. The children also counted in Hindi, repeating the numbers after her.

The Power of Play

Whether building a tower with blocks, digging for earthworms, playing a board game, pretending to be super heroes, or using puppets to tell a story, children have always used play as a primary means for learning and growing. “Play is something done for its own sake,” according to psychiatrist Stuart Brown, author of *Play*, “It’s voluntary, it’s pleasurable, it offers a sense of engagement, it takes you out of time. And the act itself is more important than the outcome.”

The benefits of play in early childhood are countless. Play offers children opportunities to explore and practice concepts, research and test ideas without worrying about a right or wrong answer, and learn about others and themselves. Most important, play provides meaningful and integrated experiences that nurture whole-child growth and development.

But in many places, play has been replaced by “real” learning, recess has been cut for the sake of more academics, and memorization activities have dominated over meaningful experiences. As play has decreased, rates of childhood stress and anxiety have increased. Educators have observed decreases in children’s engagement and interest in learning, despite the vast amount of research that affirms the benefits of learning through play.

The Bright Horizons approach

At **Bright Horizons**[®], we promise an integrated curriculum that offers an emergent, inquiry-based approach to learning. This seems like a tall order, but *World at Their Fingertips*[®] delivers on those promises through a thoughtful combination of project work, engaging experiences, and play.

Play is at the heart of our approach and philosophy. We believe that it is the primary vehicle for optimal growth in childhood. Through play, we can:

- ▶ Nurture and care for each child
- ▶ Cultivate curiosity and creativity
- ▶ Encourage children to be confident experimenters and problem solvers
- ▶ Create joyful places for childhood



Cooking with Children – Four- and Five-Year-Olds

Four- and five-year-olds are learning to control small muscles in their fingers. They are also learning the properties of things (e.g., weight, volume, color, quantity, and so on), the relationships between things, and how substances can be transformed. Try activities such as:

- ▶ Juicing oranges, lemons, and limes
- ▶ Peeling some fruits and vegetables (bananas and even onions)
- ▶ Mashing soft fruits and vegetables
- ▶ Scrubbing vegetables (potatoes, mushrooms)
- ▶ Cutting soft foods with table knives
- ▶ Pressing cookie cutters
- ▶ Measuring ingredients
- ▶ Sifting or straining



Teach. Play. Love. Parenting Advice for the Early Years

Subscribe to get new episodes!



Listen as parents and early childhood educators come together to cull the competing advice, separate fact from fiction, and focus on what does – and doesn't – matter during these early years. Be more confident, have less worry...and let Bright Horizons help make parenting the joy it was meant to be.

Teach. Play. Love. Featured Podcast Episode Say Yes to Play

“Is play important?” On this episode, Rachel Robertson, Bright Horizons education and development vice president, and new mom Amanda, tackle this increasingly popular question. Find out why play is the key to healthy child development, discover how you might already be incorporating play without even realizing it, and get new ideas you can use to engage your child in playful ways throughout the day.

Episode 4: Say Yes to Play

www.brighthorizons.com/bhpodcastEp4

Listen on the [Bright Horizons website](#), [Spotify](#), [Apple Podcasts](#), [Google, Libsyn](#), and [Stitcher](#).

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