

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY AT HOME

At Heights, we prioritize play-based learning. This guide will help explain the benefits and offer advice on how to **continue play-based learning in the home**. (You're probably already doing it!)

Play can often be dismissed as childish or frivolous, while its most prominent critics overlook its importance. People, especially children, learn through play without realizing they're learning. **Play-based learning is an effective way of learning new and challenging things because it applies new skills to hands-on activities** giving it context.

One of the fantastic things about learning through play is that it feels exactly like play, because it is! Other learning methods can sometimes feel like work or a chore, leading to frustration, boredom, or burnout. When children are learning through play, they're learning the lessons in a way that feels natural and fun.

Pretend play can help build verbal and communication skills, social skills such as problem-solving and empathy, and help kids expand their creative thinking. Maybe they're trying to save their village from a dragon, but there's a moat to cross to get to the dragon's lair. Finding a way to cross the imaginary moat will take creative problem-solving. It may require **teamwork**, as might slaying the dragon. They'll have to **communicate** with each other about which one is going to handle which task on their adventure. They may have to devise a plan that requires **organization** and helps them learn how to **prioritize** tasks.

Even accidents or mistakes while playing can teach valuable lessons. Climbing high on the jungle gym and not knowing how to get down will require **critical thinking** and **problem-solving**. It may require moving in new ways, improving **motor skill** development. Alternatively, this same situation could teach a child how to ask those around them for help which aids in building strong **self-advocacy** skills. Playing with toys that topple over by mistake can also help them to have a more robust understanding of gravity.

Your child most likely already learns through play at home. Maybe you sit with your preschooler while they **sort** blocks and talk about the **shapes** and **colors** of the blocks as they're sorting. Not only are they learning their shapes and colors, but they're also working on **matching**, which is an integral part of **cognitive development**. At the same time, they're working on their **fine motor skills** while they handle the blocks and place them into the sorter. Sorting blocks can be a time for your child to learn **numbers**, too, if you count the blocks while putting them into the sorter.

Coloring, painting, or doing other **artistic activities** while talking about the colors and shapes they're using also helps them explore those concepts. With art, you can also help them learn their secondary and tertiary colors, sometimes by accident, when colors mix. They're also learning **patience** as they work to stay in the lines or wait for their creation to dry.

Children learn about themselves through play and discover their interests, disinterests, and skills. Kids develop their own little personalities as they explore the world around them. Play helps refine motor skills, self-awareness, and social-emotional skills.

There are no limits to the things that children can learn through play!