What do young children need?

Nurturing relationships, positive interactions, and responsive communication with adults and other children

Human relationships are central to early learning. Building trust, responsiveness, attachment, and communication, is the primary work of parents/caregivers and young children—in the home and in the classroom.²⁷

Open-ended play with materials, people, ideas, and the natural world

Children learn through active, self-directed play. They need opportunities for all kinds of play—solo play, social play, sensory play, art play, construction play, pretend play, play in nature, play that uses large and fine motor skills, and play with sounds, songs, and language.²⁶¹¹

Opportunities to begin, practice, and repeat new skills and thinking

Young children thrive in environments that encourage hands-on learning, support their interests and ideas, and create plenty of opportunities for physical, intellectual, social, and emotional exploration.

Children build confidence and learn to manage themselves and their emotions as they try new things, experience struggle or failure, problem solve, and seek new challenges.²

Can screens meet a child’s needs?

There is no evidence that screen-based experiences provide the many benefits of real-world social interactions and caregiving.²⁷

Time on screens takes children away from multidimensional play, discovery, and creativity.

Screen use can interrupt the learning process and limit the development of motivation, confidence, and resilience—key ingredients for life-long wellbeing.⁶⁸¹⁰
Technology has changed, but children’s developmental needs have not! Support healthy development by aiming to do activities from each developmental bucket every day!

Physical Development

**Gross motor** (big movement and exercise)
- Walking
- Running
- Crawling
- Jumping
- Swinging
- Balancing
- Climbing
- Hopscotch
- Somersaults
- Throwing and catching
- Kicking, rolling, and catching balls

**Fine motor** (best developed using three dimensional objects)
- Puzzles
- Drawing
- Painting
- Writing
- Playdough
- Building
- Cutting and tearing

Cognitive/Brain Development

- Matching, sorting, and counting objects by shape, color, size, etc.
- Opposites: emotions (sad/happy), directions (over/under), sizes (little/big)
- Taking things apart
- Putting things together
- Imaginary play

Language Development

- Naming and describing things in the environment
- Playing “Show and Tell”
- Asking and answering questions
- Rhyming and word play
- Reading books
- Following directions (Parent to child, and child to parent)

Social-Emotional Development

- Exploring people’s faces and expressions
- Naming and expressing emotions
- Observing and identifying others’ emotions
- Showing affection (hugs, cuddling, kisses)
- Separating from and reuniting with parent/caretaker
- Taking care of a pet
- Sharing
- Taking turns
- Playing with others

Life Skills

- Helping with simple chores
- Self-directed activity & independent play
- Using the toilet
- Eating
- Bathing
- Getting dressed

What activities would you add?

An Early Childhood Work Group Project

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