

Why is play important to your child?

Play is a vital part of your child's development. Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. For young children, play and learning are one and the same, they cannot be differentiated.

Through play, important brain development is established. Play is not a break from or a reward for learning- Play is Learning!

What is your child learning by playing? Through child-directed, free-choice play,

- ... children solve problems and pursue ideas
- ... healthy connections are made in the brain
- ... there is an increase in academic skills as noted in multiple research studies
- ... children are learning how to learn- how to persist and persevere through challenges.
- ... creative and critical thinking are developed
- ... social skills such as collaboration, turn-taking, and conflict resolution are developed
- ... emotional skills such as empathy and self-control increase significantly
- ... children engage in science, engineering, and math skills including hypothesizing, experimenting, testing and concluding
- ... vocabulary and language skills grow



Dramatic Play

There is documented research that demonstrates the high level of cognitive, social, and emotional benefits from children's engagement in dramatic play.

Social/Emotional Skills:

- Sharing
- Coopering
- Building of empathy as they take on the role of someone else
- Solving of social problems
- Building of compromise
- Persisting

Critical Thinking Skills:

- Expressing of their creativity
- Flexibility in thinking
- Connections of experiences and learning
- Problem-solving
- Predicting

Academic Skills:

- Storytelling
- One to one correspondence
- Thinking symbolically
- Writing to convey meaning (treatment plan, check-up form, pet information)
- Identifying of letters/numbers/shapes

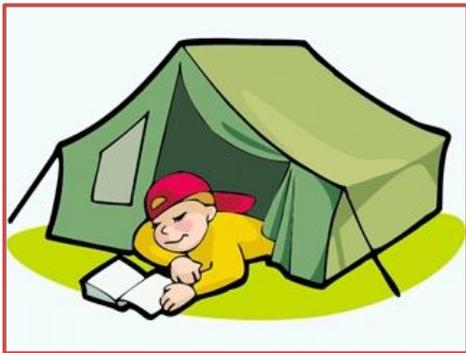
Communication Skills

- Using an expressive vocabulary- often will use more complex vocabulary such as in this center, we may hear them saying words such as examination, stethoscope, illness, fractured, etc.
- Engaging in turn-taking conversation

Dramatic Play Ideas for Home that Include VERY Little Set Up or Supplies...

• **Build a fort, cave, or shelter**

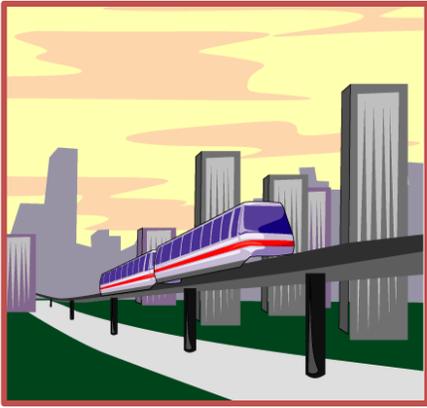
- Supply Ideas:
 - Two chairs and a blanket
 - Big box
- Suggestions:
 - Let your child's imagination soar as he/she decides what the shelter will become and what is happening outside of the shelter.
 - Is it a cave near an ocean? Can you find seashells near the cave, go swimming, lay on the beach, dig up calms and cook them over a fire?



- Is it a bear cave? Read books such as *Bear Snores On*, *Bear Can't Sleep* or *Bear Wants More* by Karma Wilson and have your child design the cave and then react the story or make up their own using the same characters.
 - Are they on the island of lost boys with Peter Pan and it is a hideout from the pirates?
 - Are they stranded on an island?
 - Is it Rapunzel's tower?
 - Is it Elsa's ice fort?
- Forts also allow your child space to be alone, to chill, to read, to play with puzzles, etc.

- **Airplane or Train:**

- Supply Ideas:
 - Put 5 chairs together (pairs side by side and one in the front).
 - Paper, crayons, markers
- Suggestions:
 - Help your child design tickets and travel brochures.
 - Have your child take on the role of pilot, flight attendant or passenger.



- Where are you going?
- What will you see?
- Are you flying to Africa and can see the giraffes and elephants as you travel across the safari on a train?
- Or maybe in Australia and can see the koalas and kangaroos?
- Or to a big city?
- What will you do when you arrive?
- Where do the passengers store their luggage? How do they get their luggage when they arrive at their destination? How do they tag their luggage?

- **Hairdresser**

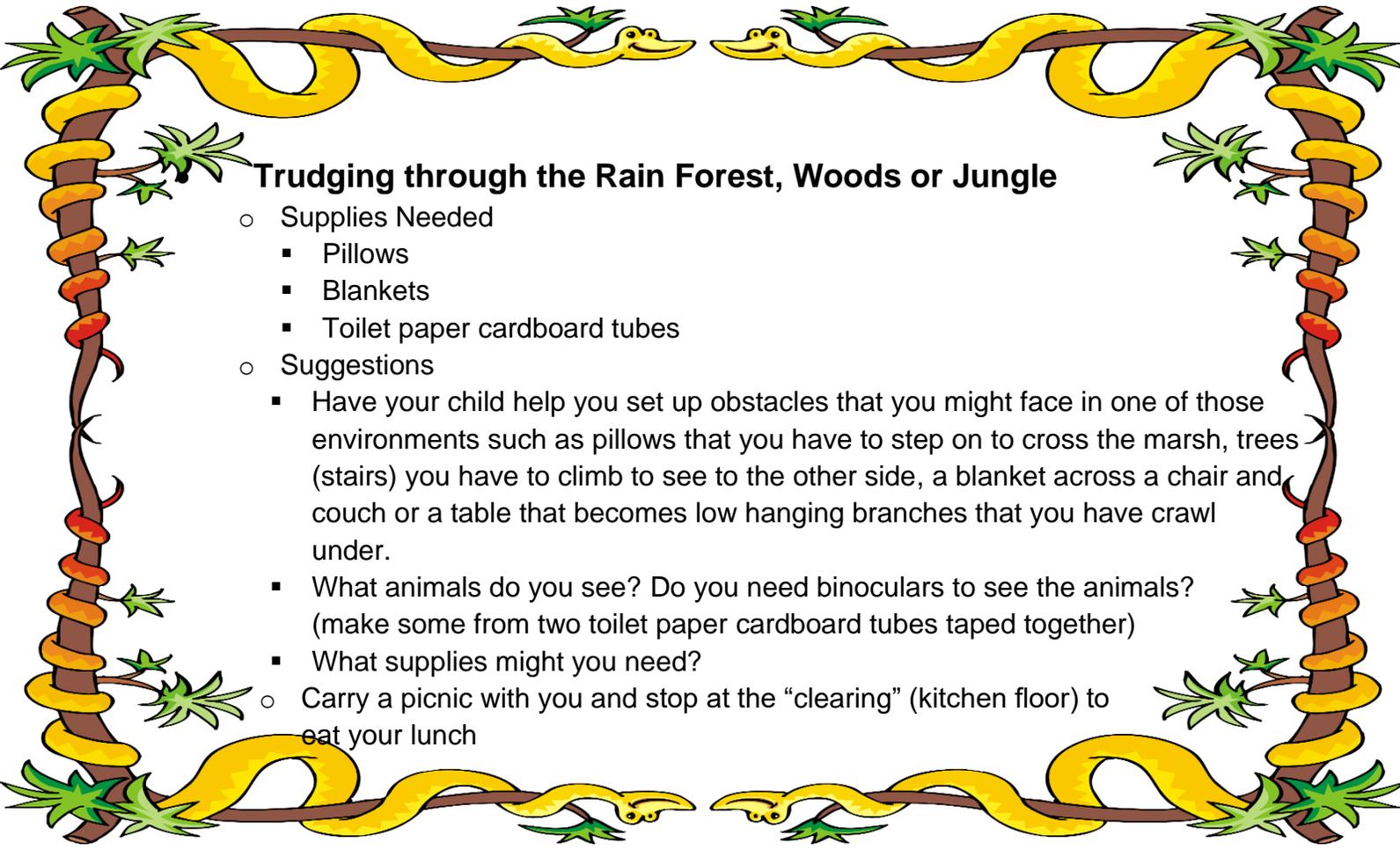
- Supply Ideas
 - Comb and brush
 - Barrettes and other hair accessories
 - Hair Blow dryer (not plugged in)
 - Straightener (not plugged in)
- Suggestions
 - Allow your child to pretend cut and style your hair.
 - Add in some additional literacy by remembering to call to make an appointment so your child can keep a schedule of appointments.
 - Don't forget to have your child write a receipt and for you to pay.



- **Window Washer**

- Supply Ideas
 - Spray bottle with water
 - Rag
 - Paper to schedule appointments
 - Phone (not plugged in)
- Suggestions
 - Call to make an appointment with the window washer, have your child keep a schedule of appointments.
 - Give him/her a spray bottle with water and a cloth and allow him/her to clean your windows.
 - Don't forget to have your child write a receipt and for you to pay. Do you need change? How much change?

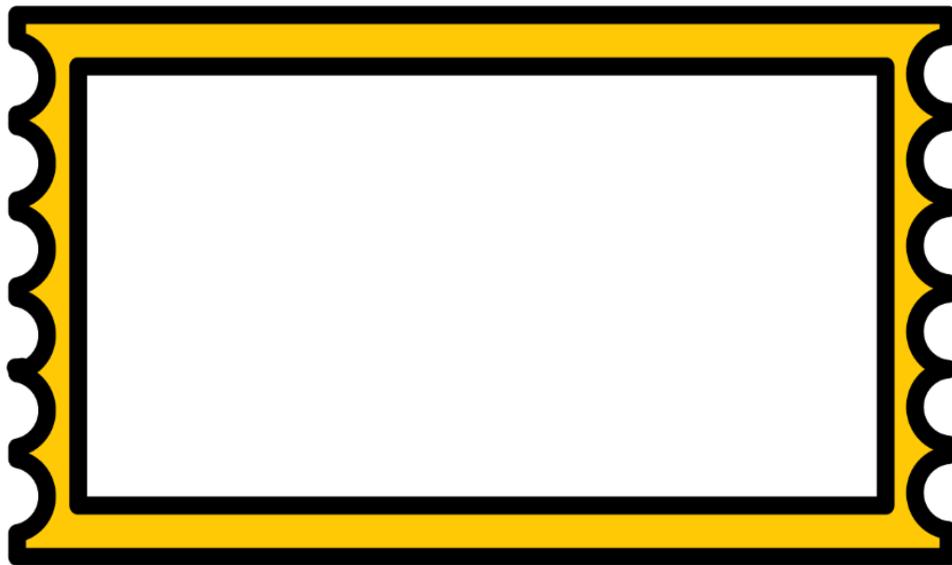




Trudging through the Rain Forest, Woods or Jungle

- Supplies Needed
 - Pillows
 - Blankets
 - Toilet paper cardboard tubes
- Suggestions
 - Have your child help you set up obstacles that you might face in one of those environments such as pillows that you have to step on to cross the marsh, trees (stairs) you have to climb to see to the other side, a blanket across a chair and couch or a table that becomes low hanging branches that you have crawl under.
 - What animals do you see? Do you need binoculars to see the animals? (make some from two toilet paper cardboard tubes taped together)
 - What supplies might you need?
- Carry a picnic with you and stop at the “clearing” (kitchen floor) to eat your lunch

- **Movie Theatre** (*Do you already have plans to watch a movie together? Turn your living room into a movie theatre.*)
 - Supply Ideas:
 - Tickets, brochure, money, and concession signs and prices- allow your child to make. Only need paper and crayons or markers



- Suggestions:

- What roles will your child play? Ticket taker, concession stand clerk or is it a dine-in theatre and he/she need to take your order and deliver the snacks?
 - Have your child name the theatre and make a sign, make tickets and make signs for the concession stand- how much will popcorn, pop, apple, chips, candy bar, etc. cost (whatever you are willing to serve at your theatre!) Cut apart some paper and write a number on it to use as money. Allow your child to “make change” for you.
 - Have your child make a movie brochure by drawing pictures of 3-4 movies and then collecting a vote from each family member. Show your child how to make tally marks to show each person’s vote.



- **Basic Home Living and Grocery Store**

Let your child’s imagination take off while taking on the role of mom, dad, brother, baby, dishwasher repair person, mail carrier, etc. in a basic home set up- add a grocery store for some extra fun and creativity

- Supply ideas

- Bowls, spoons, pots, plates, etc.
- Empty big boxes to become the stove, dishwasher, washing machine and dryer
- Bottle caps, corks, shells or jar lids with letters of the alphabet written on them to become food- “Can you bake me cookies that spell your name?”
- Old clothes, old iron or iron not plugged in
- Paper to write grocery lists and recipes
- Cookbook

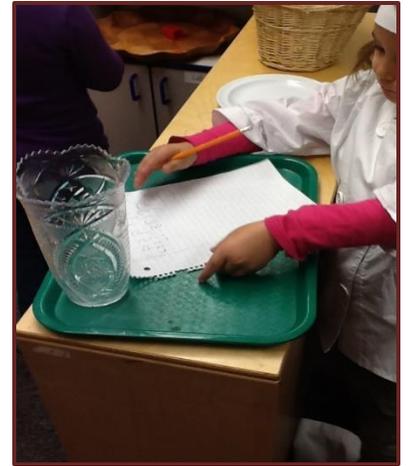
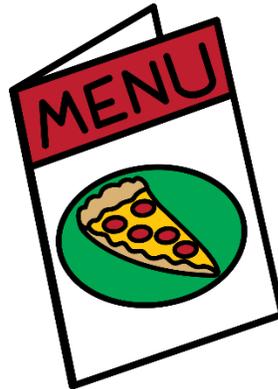
- Empty and clean up food containers (cereal boxes, egg carton, cracker box, oatmeal container)

- Suggestions:

- Add a grocery store by setting up empty and clean food containers (tin cans, boxes, water bottles)



- Turn the home living area into a restaurant by adding some menus and paper for ordering. You can use take out menus but even better is to allow your child to make his/her own menu- drawing pictures is great! There is no need to force writing – if your child is developmentally ready to start adding in some words, they can even start with just the beginning letter.



- **Office**

- Supply Ideas
 - Keyboard
 - Clipboard
 - Phone (not plugged in)
 - Paper
 - Pens/pencils
 - Phone book
 - Notepad



- **School**

- Supply Ideas
 - Books
 - Stuffed animals
 - Paper, crayons, markers
 - Magazines
 - Scissors



Open-Ended Questions to Expand Children's Play in a Dramatic Play Center:

- What do you need to...
- How is it the same as...
- What would happen now/ next if...
- How would you describe...
- I notice.... Tell me more....
- * How is it different than...
- * What else can you do with...
- * What is your plan...
- * How many different ways...
- * How does someone know...

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