



This message is meant to be cut out, photocopied, and sent home with children as a resource for parents! It is also available online at [NAEYC.org/tyc](http://NAEYC.org/tyc).

**naeyc**

MESSAGE IN A BACKPACK™

# Things Every Parent Should Know about Play

Laurel Bongiorno

Play supports children's learning in so many ways. Make sure your child has time to play to promote cognitive, language and literacy, physical, social, and emotional development.

## Children learn through their play

Never underestimate the value of play! While playing, children learn and develop

- **Cognitive skills**—like choosing the blocks to build a tower as high as possible
- **Language skills**—like learning the vocabulary words they need for different play scenarios
- **Literacy skills**—like writing an appointment in a pretend dentist's office
- **Physical abilities**—like gluing a collage and running on the playground
- **Social skills**—like playing together in a pretend car wash with workers and customers
- **Emotional skills**—like waiting for a turn to be the pretend bus driver

## Play is healthy

Play helps children grow strong and healthy. It also can help prevent child obesity through its active nature.

## Play reduces stress

Play helps children grow emotionally. It is joyful and provides an outlet for anxiety and stress.



## Play outside

Think about your own outdoor experiences of building forts, sledding in the winter, or playing with other children in the neighborhood. Make sure your children create outdoor memories, too.

## Play and learning go hand in hand

Play and learning are not separate activities but are closely connected. Think about them as a science lecture with a lab—play is a child's lab.

## Play is a child's context for learning

Children practice and reinforce their learning in multiple areas during play. For example, in playing restaurant, children write and draw menus, set prices, take orders, and play out roles. Play provides rich learning opportunities and leads to children's success and growth in self-esteem.

**LAUREL BONGIORNO**, PhD, is dean of the Division of Education and Human Studies at Champlain College, in Burlington, Vermont, and oversees the MEd in Early Childhood Education.

Message in a Backpack™ is available online in Spanish. Visit [NAEYC.org/tyc](http://NAEYC.org/tyc) to start reading now!

Photographs: © Getty Images