



Adventure Play at Home Guide

**Promote curiosity and imagination
through hours of fun
activities and challenges.**

For other great resources and activities, go to [Calgary.ca/athome](https://calgary.ca/athome)



Adventure Play is about allowing children to explore, discover and be creative through unstructured activities and challenges. It helps them develop their problem solving, emotional, social and motor skills by using a variety of materials in different ways.

Importance of Play Learning

Unstructured play is vital for **child development** and it is a **child's right!**

It gives children infinite opportunities to be extremely **creative** and it empowers them to **“think outside the box.”**

It is a great opportunity for children to learn how to determine **what is safe and what is not**, how to **cooperate with siblings**, how to **take turns** and **solve problems** independently.

Children love playing with items that can be moved, stacked, put together, taken apart, organized and sorted. They can choose how they want to play with everything from balls to boxes to sand. **Open-ended play** is important for children!

Benefits of Play

1. Develop fine motor skills
2. Social emotional learning & teamwork
3. Cognitive development
4. Creative thinking
5. Language development



5 Steps to Incorporate Play at Home

1. Create a safe play environment

- Assess space where play will take place (ie. one room or small space inside home or outdoor area)
- Check space for possible hazards (eg. glass windows)
- Provide age appropriate play items and ensure items are clean and safe to play with. (ie. no sharp edges, glass containers, small parts)



2. Encourage imagination

- Try not to give directions
- Observe and listen to your children as they play
- Loose parts allow children to let their imagination run wild
- You can ask open ended questions to help them discover and learn but let them experiment

3. Support your child's creativity

- Provide open ended learning by providing a variety of items for loose parts play
- Support their love of being creative
- Open ended play enables children to collaborate and work together, which build their planning, negotiating and problem-solving skills
- At toddler stage, play is about exploring everything around them and working things out for themselves
- Take their lead and assist their play instead of telling them or leading them

4. Teach sustainable practices

- Introduce recycling items and have them think about its different uses
- See what is available in your recycling bin to re-use

5. Give children the opportunity to learn and have fun

- Leave them alone and let them have a great time
- Who says a colander is not a headgear?

Types of Play with Some Examples

1. Imaginative Play

- Dress-up
- Pretend play

2. Construction Play

- Construction toys (wooden blocks, Duplo, LEGO)
- Construction and tools

3. Artistic Play

- Free play using craft materials
- Magnet painting

4. Music & Sound Play

- Homemade drum
- PVC Pipe Xylophone

5. Sensory play

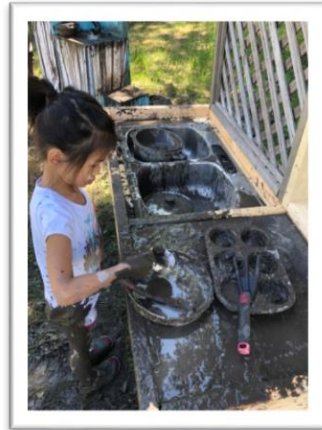
- Slime, playdough
- Shaving foam
- Water and sand tables/bins

6. Outdoor play

- Fairy garden
- Mud kitchen

7. S.T.E.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathletics)

- Marshmallow and toothpick challenges
- Science experiments



Supporting learning through hands on exploration

Here is a list of loose parts you can find at home!

Recycled materials

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|--|
| Cardboard boxes | Popsicle sticks | Empty containers and jars |
| Paper rolls | Yogurt containers | Milk cartons & milk crates |
| Feathers | Envelope papers | Packaging products: bubble wraps, wrapping paper |
| Coffee cans | Bottle caps | scraps, styrofoam |
| Cupcake liners | Egg cartons | Ribbons, strings, ropes |
| Baby food jars | Sticks of any kind | Corks |
| Rubber bands | Plastic bottles | |

Household items:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------|--|
| Chairs | Buttons | Fabric, blanket, bed sheets |
| Couches | Sport balls | Kitchen utensils: spoons, potato masher, sieves, colanders |
| Funnels | Pillows | Old clothes |
| Pots and pans | Brooms | Baskets |
| Old jewellery | Colanders | Old pool noodles |
| Clothes pegs | Baking trays | |
| | Hammer and nails | |

Natural materials:

| | | |
|----------------|--------|----------------------|
| Twigs/branches | Logs | Pebbles/stones/rocks |
| Pine cones | Shells | Wood chips |
| Gravel | Leaves | Bamboo |
| Sand | Soil | Flowers |
| Mud | | |



Start your collection of loose parts!

Adventure Play Activities

“We don’t stop playing because we grow old;
we grow old because we stop playing.”
- George Bernard Shaw

Play Activity #1

Design or construct an activity using a variety of cardboard paper rolls that you already have at home. Be creative and use other materials if needed!

Sample materials:

- Toilet paper rolls
- Paper towel rolls
- Cardboard for posters or wrapping paper

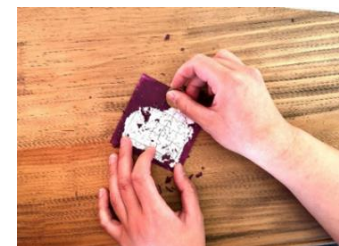


Play Activity #2

Take “I Spy” to the next level. Can you create an interactive scavenger hunt using things you already have at home for someone in your family to discover? Make a treasure map, search for hidden clues, unscramble a secret message or find things to match.

Sample materials:

- Paper bags
- Spy glasses
- Paper
- Cardboard box
- Paper towel rolls
- Magnifying glass



Play Activity #3

Construct a den, fort or playhouse indoors using household or recycled materials or natural materials in your backyard.

Sample materials:

- Blankets
- Tarp
- Pillows
- Cardboard boxes
- Bedsheets
- Toys
- Chairs, stools
- Sticks of any kind

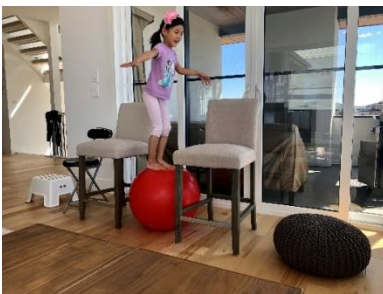


Play Activity #4

Balance Building: Find uneven or unstable objects to play on different levels and challenge your balance.

Sample materials:

- Chairs
- Couches
- Tables
- Stools
- Various types of boxes
- Tree stumps and sticks
- 2 x 4 wood pieces
- The possibilities are endless



Play Activity #5

Bring the ocean indoors. Design various ocean friends and use what you have at home to create a fishing experience and game!

Sample materials:

- Wooden sticks
- Skewers
- String
- Cardboard paper
- Construction paper
- Clips and magnets of any kind
- Markers, paint, crayons



Play Activity #6

Create a small world tiny garden in your backyard, planter or dish using a collection of small, natural materials. Be sure not to break parts off plants. Construct your garden features like ponds, trails, huts and ziplines. Who is your garden for? Have fun playing with figures you construct such as fairies, pirates, animals or small toys and tell a story.

Sample materials:

- Spot outside or container (e.g. pie pan, tray, box, flowerpot)
- Dirt and natural materials (stones, pinecones, sticks)
- Craft materials
- Small toys



Play Activity #7

Set up a camp out or tent using household items in your backyard or nearby park and spend some time under the sky. What do you see in the clouds? Can you find the moon? Maybe you can discover the different constellations and begin to differentiate between planets and stars!

Sample materials:

- Bedsheets
- Tarp
- Binoculars
- Lawn chairs
- Blankets
- Flashlights
- Pillows



Play Activity #8

What could be more fun than water, dirt and sand? A mud kitchen! Let your imaginations soar as you mix, pour, scoop and splash. “Kitchens” can be set up for long-lasting imaginative play.

Sample materials:

- Pots and pans
- Spoons, ladles
- Sieves, colanders
- shovels
- Small plastic containers (e.g. ice cream tub, yogurt cups)
- Pie and muffin pans
- Teacups



Play Activity #9

Painting with tools is a great way to become familiar with tools and explore different shapes, color mixing and prints made by various tools!

Sample materials:

- Paper
- Nuts, bolts and screws
- Kitchen utensils
- Various washable colors of paint
- Screwdrivers, hammers and wrench



Play Activity #10

Create a human sundial by tracing outlines of your shadow with chalk on the pavement at different times of the day. Or you can use your favorite toy to trace its shadow on a piece of paper. What time of day is the shadow the smallest? What are other creative ways to play with shadows?

Sample materials:

- Paper
- Marker
- Sidewalk chalk or paint
- Toy



Adventure Play Challenges

“Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.”

- Mr. Fred Rogers

Play Challenge #1

BUILD THE TALLEST STRUCTURE

Use anything you have at home as building materials: toys, pillows, boxes, books, chairs or anything else you can find.



Play Challenge #2

BUILD A DEVICE WITH MOVING PARTS

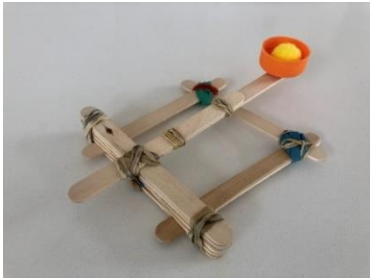
Design and construct a device using any household and recycled materials that can move as quickly as possible and travel the farthest.



Play Challenge #3

WHAT CAN YOU USE TO MAKE A CATAPULT?

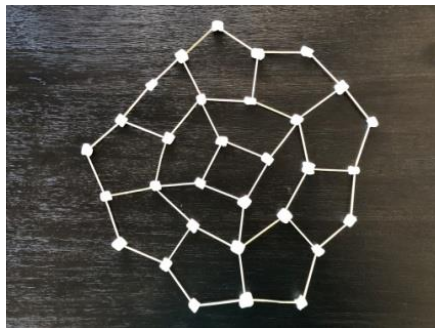
A catapult is a device used to launch a projectile a great distance using sudden release of stored energy to propel. What household items and recycled materials can you use to build a catapult?



Play Challenge #4

DESIGN A SPIDER WEB

Spring is here! Spiders are fascinating to watch when they spin their web to catch insects to eat. Can you design your own spider web using household items?



Play Challenge #5

CONSTRUCT A DEVICE THAT CAN FLY

What helps a device fly through the air? Build a device using recycled and household items and challenge yourself to make changes in order to adjust the speed, direction or distance.



Play Challenge #6

WHAT CAN YOU USE TO BUILD A STABLE STRUCTURE

Build a stable structure that can support a large weight using wooden clothespins, binder clips and/or popsicle sticks only.



Play Challenge #7

BUILD A RAIN SHELTER

Build a rain shelter using supplies found at home for your toys. Test its durability using a watering can or spray bottle. Did your shelter keep the inside dry and did it stand on its own?



Play Challenge #8

BUILD A RAFT THAT FLOATS

Build a raft that floats using natural materials. Give it a test in a large puddle, kitchen sink, or bucket of water. How many objects can your raft hold before it sinks?



Play Challenge #9

BUILD A SQUIRREL BENCH

Squirrels are nimble, bushy-tailed rodents that can be found in your backyard, around parks or running across the fence! Squirrels are always on the move to find food. What household and recycled items can you use to build a squirrel picnic table or bench so that they have a place to eat and hang out? Remember not to feed the squirrels. They have enough natural food which is better for them.



Play Challenge #10

CREATE A RAINBOW

Light can be split into different colors of the rainbow by a process called refraction. What can you use around your house to create your own rainbow at home, just like the ones you see in the sky? How many colors do you see?

