

Stages of Play

The main stages of play

AGE (roughly)	STAGE OF PLAY	DESCRIPTION
0-2 years	Solitary play	Solitary (solo) play simply means that the child is playing alone, despite the little interaction with others.
2-2.5 years	Spectator play	This is a term used for a child that is watching other children play but will not join in
2.5-3 years	Parallel play	A child playing alongside others but not with them, e.g. 2 children playing in the sandpit next to each other but not playing together
3-4 years	Simple co-operative play	Children playing together with little or no plan/structure to their activity (taking turns). Also developing friendship preferences usually mixed sex groups.
4-6+ years	Complex co-operative play	Children playing together with a plan of a structure/working as a team to complete an activity.

Other stages of play include:

- **IMAGINATIVE PLAY** – which usually begins at 18-24 months and continues well into school age, an example of this is using a brick as a phone or role play
- **CREATIVE PLAY** – begins around the age of 2.5-3 years and will continue into school age e.g. using sounds in stories or making up scenarios
- **PHYSICAL PLAY** – beginning around 3-4 years and continuing into school age. This play includes interactions such as dancing, Simon says, Mr wolf and general 'playground' games
- **MANIPULATIVE PLAY** – also beginning around 3-4 years this type of play is used to describe the creative activities e.g. making something, threading beads, building structures.

NOTE children may reach some stages of play earlier or later than others depending on their personal abilities.