

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Historical Materials from University of
Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

Extension

1992

EC92-440 Learning Is Child's Play

Patricia E. Steffens

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Cindy Strasheim

University of Nebraska - Lincoln, cstrasheim1@unl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist>



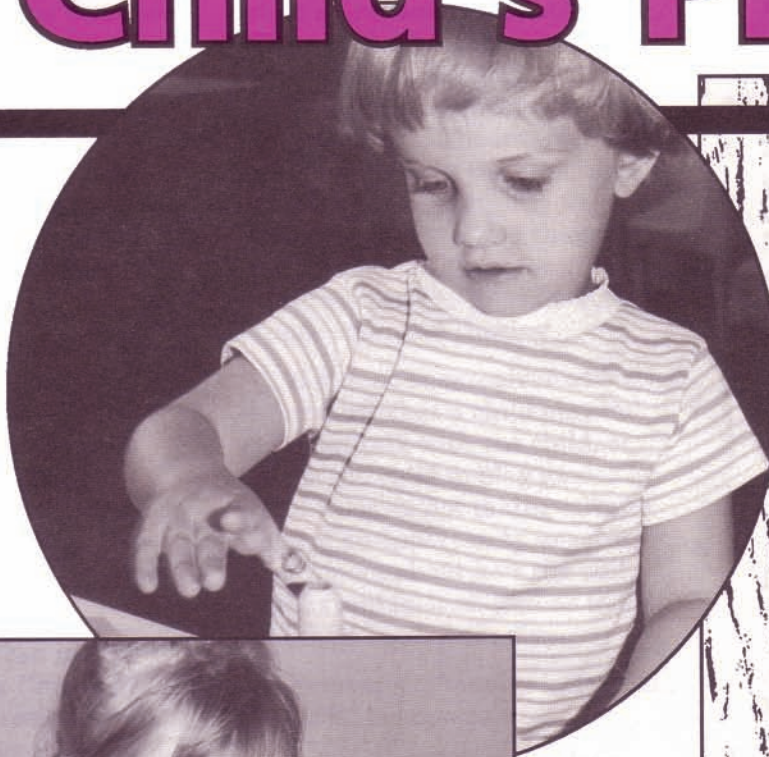
Part of the [Agriculture Commons](#), and the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

Steffens, Patricia E. and Strasheim, Cindy, "EC92-440 Learning Is Child's Play" (1992). *Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension*. 1947.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/extensionhist/1947>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Extension at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Historical Materials from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Learning Is Child's Play



Learning Is Child's Play

Pat Steffens
Extension Family Life Specialist
Cindy Strasheim
Interim Family Life Specialist

Play is a natural activity for young children. To the preschool child, play provides many opportunities to learn and grow—physically, mentally and socially. Play allows children to explore, create, experiment with new ideas, and try out what they have learned. A child can practice communication skills while solving problems.

Toys are a child's tools for play. Children need toys to develop and learn. As a parent or childcare provider you can enhance the quality of that education by providing different types of meaningful play. Carefully selected toys can increase a child's creativity.

The toys described in the series, *Learning Is Child's Play*, are designed for preschool children and the games are to be played with an adult. Each guide covers a specific toy and describes the materials needed and instructions for playing. The games suggested with each toy provide learning experiences for developing eye-hand coordination, small muscle skills, cooperation, communication skills, and many others. The guide for each toy is designed to help an adult expand a child's knowledge and self-concepts. It also may help parents or caregivers to become more effective and satisfied in their roles.

We often think about child's play only in relation to their playing with other children. Too many times the opportunities of an adult playing games with a child are overlooked. Parents and caregivers play major roles in a

child's development. They are a child's first and best teachers. The preschool years are a time when the way adults react to, work with, and play with a child are important. The interaction will provide both the adult and the child an opportunity to get to know the feelings and thoughts of one another. This interaction can, in turn, open the lines for communication and sharing.

A parent or caregiver who sits by and watches a child play but does not talk with the child, or forces the child to play games by rigid rules, is not taking advantage of an opportunity to get to know more about how the child thinks and feels as well as to help the child learn from play.

Remember: Quality time, and lots of it, is important!

It is believed that children develop their feelings about learning early in life. An adult can encourage and share in the enthusiasm a child has about "discovering" new information. Learning can be a positive experience for both the child and the adult. This one-on-one play can facilitate caring relationships between adult and child. As an adult who interacts with children, you have the opportunity to help them learn, build their self-esteem, and show them how to get along with others.

These toys can be constructed or they can be borrowed from Toy Lending Libraries which are being developed in cooperation with Kiwanis groups in Nebraska. For more information, building plans for the toys, or

borrowing the toys contact your local Cooperative Extension Office.

Guidelines For Play

Following these guidelines will provide for more meaningful, effective play interaction between adult and child.

1. Make sure you read and understand the instructions before beginning each game. If you have a clear understanding of the game, you will be able to explain it properly to the child without confusion.
2. The physical setting is important when playing with children. Try to be on the same level with the child when playing. The child should be comfortable and not feel dwarfed by a chair or a table when playing a game. If you can be comfortable sitting on the floor, that might be the best place to play.
3. Allow the child time to examine and play with the toy alone before beginning the game. This allows the child the chance to become familiar with the toy's size, shape, color, etc. The child will feel more comfortable with the toy and the adult will have an opportunity to observe the child's activity.
4. Don't force a child to play. Ask **once** if they want to play the game. If he or she does, fine; if not, wait until another time and ask again. Avoid forcing children to take part in any activity no matter how much you think they might learn from it. The child may think he or she would fail and doesn't want to face failure at the present time. Let the child

choose when he or she is ready. When allowed to have a choice or a role in the decision making, the child feels better about himself or herself and the game—the learning experience will be more effective.

5. While playing the game, the child may want to change the rules or make new ones. Ask the child to tell **you** the instructions to his or her “new” game. This encourages creativity, demonstrates mutual respect, and increases the child’s feeling of self-worth.
6. Continue playing the game only as long as the child is interested and not bored. When he or she becomes bored or tired, move on to another game or stop playing entirely. Encourage a child to play, but don’t let your encouragement grow into forcing or nagging. To be effective the game must be fun for both of you.
7. Positive reactions when the child gives a wrong answer is important. Negative reactions or put-downs may damage a child’s self-concept or sense of well-being and should be avoided. If the child makes an incorrect choice, repeat the question and help the child find the answer: “We are looking for the **largest** square. That is the **middle-sized** square. Can you find the **largest** square?” When the child selects the correct answer say, “Yes, that is the **largest** square.” This helps reinforce the concept as well as giving the child encouragement for doing well and continuing.

There is no special training required to use these toys, but it is recommended that you read through all of the material before beginning.

Playing with a child can and should be an enjoyable way of providing learning experiences. The games discussed in this series reinforce the importance of play in a preschool child’s life. The toys provide tools for the parent or caregiver to use that are fun and educational. The skills that can be learned are basic and are needed to expand a child’s knowledge of his or her environment and to function in a more mature way.

Early learning that is fun will help a child reach for more. Positive reinforcement is best. The way an adult encourages or discourages a child may markedly affect that child’s self-esteem and future attitude toward learning. Enjoy your playtime with a child.

Remember, Learning Is
Child’s Play.

Revision of a Parent Child
Interaction Project originally
designed by the Department of
Child and Family Development,
University of Missouri Extension
Division.

Sound Cans

(Not recommended for children under four years of age without supervision.)

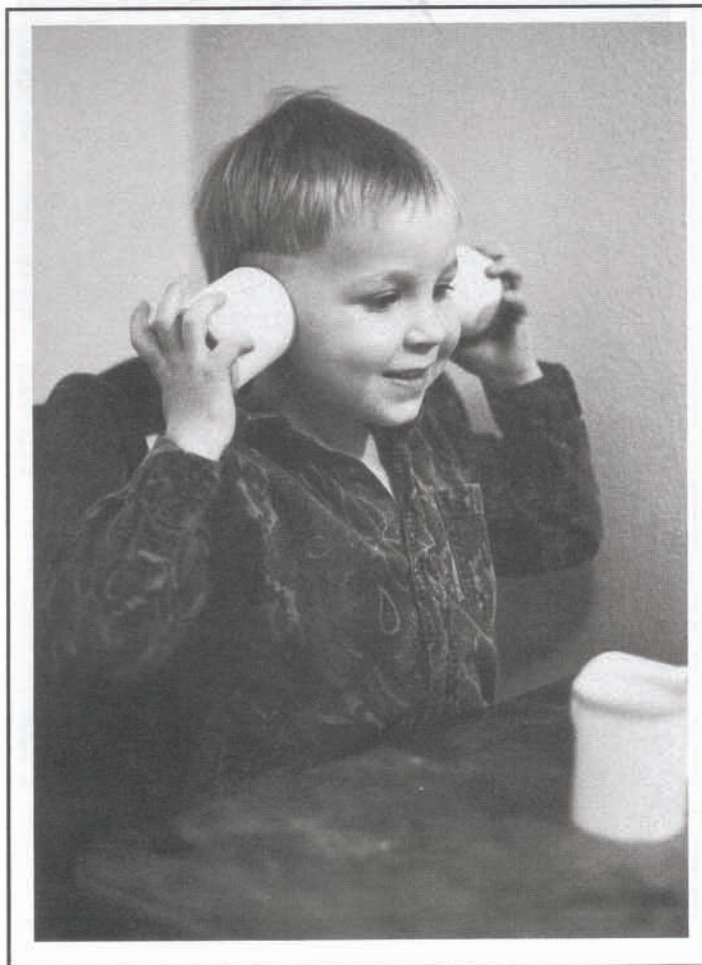
Children learn by listening. One way for children to learn to listen is to play a sound can game. The game encourages a child to listen for sounds that are the same or different.

Description

Sound Cans is a game played using unbreakable, non-transparent, capped containers. They may be plastic, metal, or cardboard such as frosting, margarine, or play dough containers. Fill the cans in one set with objects that will make different sounds. The objects should be either very small, such as grains of rice, unpopped popcorn, macaroni, sunflower seeds, or large such as ping pong balls, large rocks, or wooden blocks. The second set must be filled with the same kind and amount of fillings. Sharp objects such as pins and thumb tacks **should not** be put in the containers. Any items used must be safe to be handled if they are removed from the container. The children will want to shake the cans as well as see what is inside.

Game

Divide the sound cans so that the adult and each child have a complete set. This game works well with one child or a small group. A set might contain an empty can, a can with unpopped



corn, a can with a wooden block, etc.

Most children will be curious and want to shake the cans and open them to see what is inside. It's fine to let them play with and shake the cans.

When you're ready to begin the game, pick up one of your cans and shake it. Invite the child to shake it and then find the can in his or her set that sounds the same. If the wrong can is chosen, shake both cans again so the child can hear the difference. To avoid judgments of "right or wrong" say, "Your can

doesn't sound like mine. Can you find the one that sounds just like mine?" Continue to shake the cans and ask the child to find the same sound until all the cans have been tried.

To change the game, simply change the materials inside the cans.

Summary

Listening is an important way of learning about the environment. Listening games are fun and help develop an important communication skill.

An easy task to begin developing listening skills is identification of common sounds such as a door slamming, a dog barking, etc. Toys

like *Sound Cans* help a child develop the more difficult skill of identifying sounds as the same or different.

Safety Hazard Note: Film canisters were used in an earlier edition of this toy and should be eliminated. Sharp objects such as pins and tacks were placed in some of them and they could escape and cause injury. The lids were glued on—but no glue seal is permanent. Also, the lids on 35mm film canisters present a choking danger.

Number Puzzle

Children love to play with numbers and should be encouraged to do so. Knowing numbers is essential to a child's ability to solve problems and to understand mathematics. The *Number Puzzle* can teach children to identify numbers and count numerical quantities in sequence from zero to ten.

Description

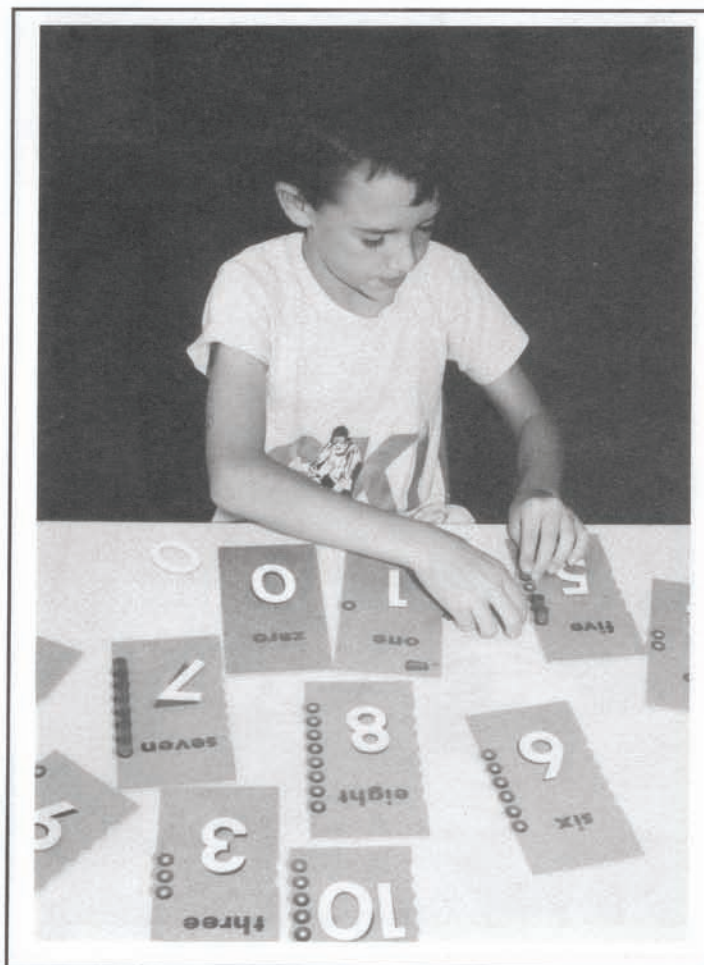
The *Number Puzzle* consists of 10 rectangle representing the numbers "1" to "10". Each rectangle is notched on the left side to equal the preceding number. The notches on the right side equal the number represented on that rectangle. This means the rectangles will only fit together in the proper numerical order.

There are also holes for pegs on the right side of each rectangle so that counting a quantity for each number is part of the game. (Safety Note: The use of the pegs included with this toy is not recommended for children under four without direct supervision because of potential choking hazard.)

This game may be purchased from a pre-school supply catalog or constructed using masonite or plywood. The instructions and detailed plans are available by contacting your local University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Office.

Game I

Pick up each rectangle in numerical order, and while pointing to the number say, "This is the number one." As you do this with



each rectangle, encourage the child to remove the pegs and "count" together as the child replaces them.

Progress through the numbers until you have counted all 10 sections of the puzzle. As you play this game, remember not to rush the child and don't get disturbed if the child doesn't count along with you. It may take several sessions before the child understand the relationship between the number and the quantity.

The child may want to take the pegs out and put them back in the holes in the rectangles. Encourage the child to count as he or she does so. This will reinforce the counting procedure and give practice in hand-eye coordination.

Game II

This game will teach the child number sequence. Take the number one rectangle saying, "This is number one," and count the pegs together. Then ask the child, "What number is next?" If the child correctly identifies the number two, say "Yes, the number two comes next. Can you count the pegs?" If the child chooses the wrong number, avoid telling the child he or she is wrong. Instead, choose the correct number and say "Two is the next number. Can you count the pegs?"

This toy may require more practice than the other toys unless the child has had a lot of experience in counting. Don't let the child become discouraged if it seems to takes a long time to understand the

numbers; counting is a difficult skill to learn. It may be easier to break it down into smaller tasks and use only puzzle pieces one to five at first. After the child has mastered identifying, naming and counting those numbers you can add more.

The environment around the child can be used to help the child learn about numbers. "There are two windows in the room. We have one table and four chairs." "You have one nose...two eyes...two hands... ten fingers, let's count them." Reinforce these concepts as often as you can during the day — at lunch, story time — wherever numbers are present. A child is learning all the time!

Color Blocks

Preschoolers of all ages love color and enjoy playing with blocks. Blocks are one of the most versatile children's toys. They can be used in building, counting, comparing sizes and colors. Children can also learn to see patterns, match patterns, and create their own. *Color Blocks* will help children learn words of position that tell where things are located.

Description

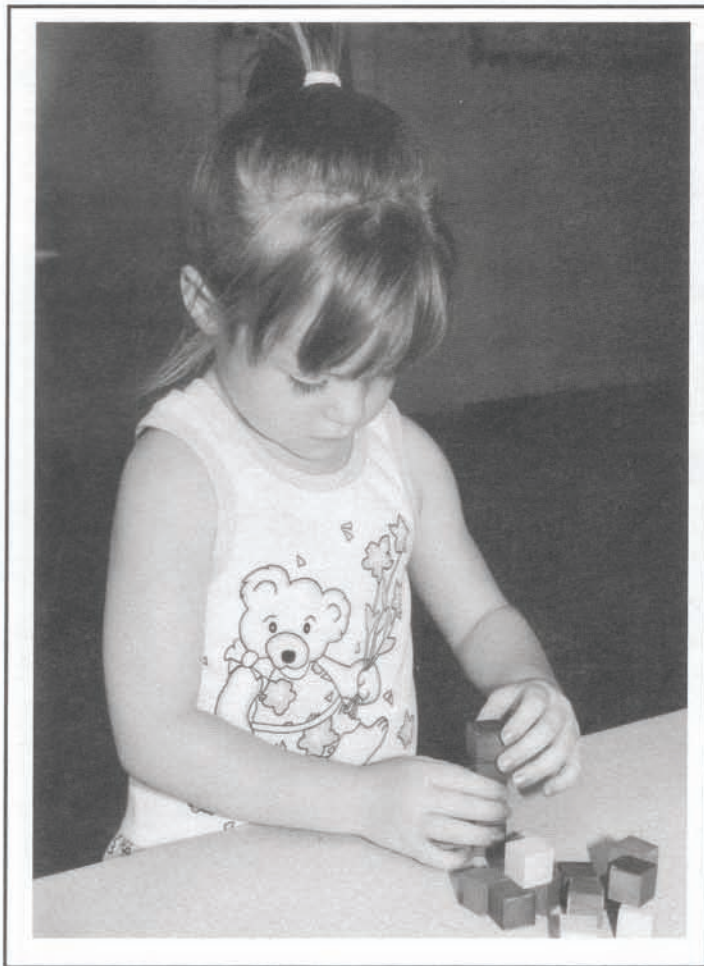
Color Blocks consists of 16 blocks the same size - four each of red, blue, green, or yellow and a small empty box such as a shoe box.

Color Blocks are simple to make from any scrap lumber available. The 16 color blocks should be at least 1 inch square. For younger children, under three years, it would be best for the blocks to be made from 2x2 materials. After cutting the 16 blocks, corners and edges should be rounded and sanded smooth and painted with a nontoxic, washable paint.

Game I

This game will teach a child words of position—words that tell where things are located—on, under, beside, behind, etc. Put the blocks and box on the floor or table and allow the child to play with them for a while without interference. This gives the child time to become familiar with the blocks and an opportunity to express some creativity.

After a few minutes, position the empty box and blocks in front of the child. Picking up a block, ask the child to "put the yellow block on top of the box." If the child puts the block in a different place, such



as in front of the box, say, "you have put the yellow block in front of the box. Now put it on top of the box."

If the child puts the block on the top of the box, say, "Yes, you put the yellow block on top of the box." Repeat the procedure naming the color of the block and the "position" for the block. Other position words that you might include are: underneath, in front of, in back of, behind you, in, off, out of, and between.

If the child wants to change the rules of the game or give instructions to you—cooperate. This shows respect and makes the child feel important.

Game II

This game will help a child recognize colors, learn about patterns and how to match them. Allow the

child time to explore the blocks before beginning the game. Watch the patterns as the child tries out creative color arrangements.

Using two colors only, form a short row of blocks, being sure the child is watching. Then ask the child to use the same colors and make a row that is "the same as" yours. The child may not be able to do this without assistance for the first few times. Help the child by telling the color of the block to put down, "Put down a red block, then a blue block, then a red." You can continue the game by increasing the number of colors used in a pattern.

Once this activity is mastered, place your blocks in a pattern using all the colors and simply ask the child to repeat the pattern. Then, let the child make patterns for

you to match.

Summary

Color Blocks is a simple game for teaching the concept of patterns and position. Many other toys, objects, situations, and conversations can teach or reinforce these same concepts. Position can be introduced into the child's daily activities. For example, "Come sit beside me." "Take the toy to the front of the room and place it beside the other toys." The child will begin to notice pattern in the environment if time is taken to point it out.

Children will learn. What they learn and how well they learn depends a lot on interested and caring adults.

Matching Board

Developing the skill to recognize shapes and forms is one way of learning how to identify objects. Adults can help children learn to recognize shapes by talking with them about what they see and by playing games with them. The *Matching Board* gives children practice in identifying and matching shapes and also helps them identify colors.

Description

The *Matching Board* is divided into eight sections which are painted a different color. There are two in-set puzzle pieces of each shape, painted to match the section into which it can be fitted.

This game may be purchased from a pre-school supply catalog or constructed using masonite or plywood. The instructions and detailed plans are available by contacting your local University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Office.

Game I

One of the simplest games using the *Matching Board* can help a child recognize shapes. Remove all pieces from the board. Hand the child the circle and say, "Place the circle in its place on the board." Call the shape by name each time you refer to a puzzle piece. Repeat with remaining shapes.



If the child puts it on an incorrect space, avoid telling the child he or she is wrong. Instead, name the shape they have used. "You have placed the circle on the triangle space. Can you find the circle space on the board?"

Game II

Another way we can use the *Matching Board* will help a child to identify colors as well as shapes.

Place all pieces on the board in their matching shape spot. Ask the child to close his or her eyes while you remove a piece from the board. Then ask the child to

identify which piece is missing (purple square, green circle, etc.)

Be sure that the child states the color and the shape name. If the child doesn't, simply state, "The purple square is missing." This reinforces the color and the shape.

Game III

Another game you can devise lets children become designers.

Cut several squares out of paper or posterboard. Cut some squares in half so there are triangles and some rectangles. Have the child arrange the pieces of paper into designs, using his or her creativity. Encourage the child to use the concepts of position learned with the *Color*

Blocks, also reinforcing color and shape.

Summary

Young children will enjoy just putting in and taking out the shapes. Of course, not all play has the same value to the child. Parents and other adults can help guide the child to many different kinds of meaningful play. It takes time to play these games with a child but it can be very enjoyable. You may get to know the child much better and you may even discover that learning really is child's play.

Comparison Blocks

Blocks are one of the favorite toys of childhood. A child's creativity can turn ordinary blocks into games that can entertain for hours. *Comparison Blocks* will help teach a child size relationships (tallest, shortest, same, equal to, etc.) and how things relate to each other (size, shape, weight, thickness). Small blocks like the *Comparison Blocks* provide opportunities for small muscle activities.

Watch closely and let the child explore the blocks before beginning any activities.

Description

Comparison Blocks consist of 10 sizes of wooden blocks in units from one to ten. The tallest block is ten inches; the shortest is one inch. The other blocks are units between one inch and ten inches. For instructions and detailed plans, contact your nearest University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Office.

Game I

Select three blocks of varying sizes, for example, 2, 6, and 10-inch blocks. Place these in front of the child and say, "Please show me the tallest block." "Which is the shortest block?" With each correct answer, be sure to repeat, "Yes, that is the tallest block", etc. This will reinforce the concept as well as encourage the



child for making the correct choice. Repeat for "smallest" and "middle-sized". When the child seems to master these concepts of size, you may want to repeat the game. Use the 3, 5, and 8 inch blocks in a grouping that is not as contrasting in size. Continue playing with the blocks in this manner until you are sure the child understands.

If the child makes an incorrect selection, simply say, "Try again, this is the middle-sized block." Avoid judging the child's choice as right or wrong. Learning is much easier in a non-judgmental environment.

Game II

This game will teach the child about the meanings of shorter and taller. Lay out 10 different-sized blocks in front of the child. Pick up a shorter block and ask, "Can you find a block that is taller than this one?"

Let the child hold the block so he or she can measure it against the other blocks for comparison. It also helps the child feel in control and involved in decision-making.

If the child does make an inaccurate selection, ask the child to compare the blocks again. "You have chosen this block and it is shorter than my block. Is there a block that is taller than my block?" Use all the sizes of blocks to be sure the

child understands the concepts of: taller, shorter, shortest and tallest.

Children love to make up their own games and usually have amazing abilities to do so. If at any time your child wants to do this, encourage it. Listen to his or her rules and play along. You may both learn more and have more fun too.

Game III

Pick out four blocks with two being equal in size (for example 1, 4, 6, and 4-inches). You will be stressing the concept of equal or same size.

Say, "Pick out the two blocks that are the same size." Encourage the child for making the correct choice. If the child does not choose correctly say, "These two blocks are not the same size. Please try again to pick the two blocks that are the same size. Be sure not to appear judgmental in your reply to the child. If the child does select the blocks that are the same, continue selecting those blocks that are closer together in size to make groupings that are more and more difficult.

Game IV

The child now knows the concepts of taller, shorter, tallest, shortest and same size. Now the child is ready to learn the meaning of equal to.

Put a 4 inch, a 6 inch, and all the one inch blocks on the floor between you and the child. Lay the 4 inch block on the floor and ask, "Can you put these blocks side by side until they are the same size as 4?" When the child does this correctly, encourage by saying, "Yes, 4 of the one inch blocks are equal to the 4 inch block."

If the child doesn't accurately pick the blocks say, "Let's try one more or one less block to make the blocks equal in length."

To add adventure to the game, have the child stand a taller block on end and stack up the smaller blocks until they are equal.

Empty thread spools or any other household item can be used for this comparison game.

Summary

Children love to play with blocks! These games make learning the concepts of taller, shorter, tallest, shortest, and equal to a fun and creative way to learn. *Comparison Blocks* help you achieve a working and playing relationship with a child that can develop into a good educational experience.

Playing with as well as talking with children is not a waste of time. By doing these things an adult can help a child develop language skills, a healthy self-concept, and the ability to think, plan ahead, and make decisions.

Attribute Blocks

Being able to recognize attributes such as shape, size, colors, weight, texture, etc. is extremely important for organizing and classifying information that children learn. It makes it easier for children to understand something when they are able to describe it. *Attribute Blocks* help children learn to identify, name and describe the attributes of size, shape, and color.

Description

One set contains 16 large shapes- 4 circles, 4 triangles, 4 squares, and 4 rectangles with one of each painted red, green, yellow, blue, and green. There is also a smaller set identical to the larger set. All edges and corners should be rounded and smooth. The paint must be non-toxic and washable.

Game I

This game is planned so that differences in color, size and shape are discovered. Pick out eight blocks similar in some way. For example, they could all be circles. Have the child pick up one of these blocks and describe it, i.e., "This is a red circle." You select another block and explain to the child how it is different. "This block is different than your block. This block is green and yours is red." Have the child pick up another block and tell how it is different from yours.



Be specific when telling the child how the block is different. Reinforce the concept by having the child pick up another block that is a different color than the first two. If the child can tell you how it differs, that's good—if not simply say, "Is the block that you have the same color? The same size?"

Game II

This game is designed to teach the idea of sameness or matching. Using any block assortment, pick out two blocks and explain to the child how the blocks are alike in at least one way. "Both of these are squares", or "Both of these blocks are green." Then ask the child to pick up two blocks that

are alike in some way and tell you what is the same about them.

If the child has trouble describing them, help out with clues, "Have you looked at the color?" "Did you check them for size?" Always encourage effort and be alert to the child's feelings. The way you respond to an answer affects the child's self-confidence and desire to continue.

Game III

When a child is comfortable describing the blocks according to their color, shape and size, move to this more difficult game. Place eight blocks that go together in some way (for example, all the circles) on the floor in front of the child. Mix them up so they aren't in any special order. Give the child

plenty of time to see and play with them. Ask the child to close his or her eyes. Take one of the blocks and hide it behind your back. Ask the child to guess which block is missing. If the child had an idea of what the group was, how the group of blocks was the same, the child should be able to "logically" guess which one is missing. If the child doesn't guess, it is helpful to see and examine the blocks still there. Help pair up the circles so the child will be able to discover which color doesn't have a partner.

If the child still doesn't guess, show the block you hid. Put it back with the others.

Learning Squares

Being able to identify objects by size, shape and color enables a child to compare and contrast things in their surroundings. To learn, for example, the difference between "big" and "little" a child needs to talk about and handle objects or toys to understand their similarities and differences. *Learning Squares* can help a child learn the concept of same and not the same. They will learn to distinguish size and color as it relates to classifying objects.

Description

Learning Squares consists of 16 wooden squares, four each of four different sizes. These squares are painted green, red, blue and yellow (one of each size painted each color). The squares fit, in order, largest to smallest on a special wooden post. This game may be constructed or purchased from a pre-school supply catalog. The instructions and detailed plans are available by contacting your local University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Office.

Game I

Using this toy will reinforce the child's knowledge of the four colors—red, blue, green, and yellow. Let the child play for awhile to become acquainted with the parts of the toy. During this time it will be interesting for you to watch. Does the child stack the squares or group them in any way? Does the child use the wooden post or only play with the squares?



To begin the actual game, place the eight largest squares in front of the child. Pick up one of the remaining squares and ask the child to find the one that is the same color. Have the child put the square "on top of" yours. This reinforces the "position" words. If the child chooses correctly, acknowledge the choice and have him or her choose again in another color.

If the child chooses incorrectly, indicate the color of your square and give another chance, "My square is red. Can you find a square the same color as mine?" Continue until all squares have been matched.

Game II

This is another game that teaches size and relationships. Place all of the squares of *one* color in front of the child. Taking one of the remaining squares, ask the child to, "Find a square that is the same size as this square."

If the child picks up a square that doesn't match, place your square next to it and say, "Is there another square that is the same size as my square?"

Continue this game until all squares have been matched. Be sure to reinforce the color names and shapes with each round of play.

Game III

The object of this game is to help a child recognize similarity and differences in size and color and learn which things do not belong to a group.

If the child wants to play with the toy first, spread the squares out and observe. What does the child do with the squares?

When the child seems ready to actually play a game, sort the squares so there are three small and one large square in front of the child. Say to the child, "Please show me all the squares that are the same size." "Please point to the square that is different than all the rest." This reinforces the terms **different** and **the same**. "Yes, this is the same as the others." "Those squares are all larger than this green square, so they are different."

To have the child recognize patterns in a group say, "Pick the square that is different than the others. "Are there other squares of the same color?" "Can you find a design that repeats itself?"

Game IV

Learning patterns and how to extend them is the object of these games.

Place all the largest squares in a row. Using the remaining sizes of one color of squares, stack them up in order.

Do this as the child looks on. Ask the child to repeat the pattern with another color. If the child does not understand, stack up the squares in order in another color.

Once the child has a particular pattern learned—demonstrate a different pattern while the child watches: Example:

1. Take the largest blue square, the
2. next-to-largest green square, the
3. next-to-smallest blue square, and the
4. smallest green square.

"I will start another stack and you can finish it."

1. Take the largest red square, and the

2. next-to-largest yellow square. Then encourage the child to finish with the last two steps.
3. Take the next-to-smallest red square, and the
4. smallest yellow square.

If the child does not know how to finish the pattern—do step number 3 yourself (the next-to-smallest red square) and say "What square goes on the top?"

Summary

This game will take concentration on the part of the child and patience on the part of the adult. Every time you do something, give the child time to respond. When you help—explain exactly what you are doing—in clear, concise language. Though it may seem easy and obvious to you, it's a difficult task for a child. Simple clear directions will help the child master the task with accuracy and ease. If directions are not clear and concise the child will be confused and frustrated.

Children can learn concepts through their eyes and hands that would be hard to describe using only words. Children have an amazing ability to come up with their own patterns or games. Allowing a child to do this encourages creativity and self-expression—both of which are extremely important in the development of a pre-school child.

Color Lotto

Learning colors opens a new world for children, enabling them to describe and make sense of the environment around them. Because color is an element that makes our world more interesting, children often learn some basic ideas about color even before they can talk. *Color Lotto* has been a favorite for playing various kinds of color games. It will help children identify, name, and match nine common colors.

Description

Color Lotto is a square wooden board divided into nine smaller squares, each a different color. There are also two sets of matching colored squares—one set for the adult and one for the child. This game may be constructed using masonite or plywood or purchased from a pre-school supply catalog. The instructions and detailed plans are available by contacting your local University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Office.

Game I

Before you begin, give the child a chance to examine the toy and to play with the squares. Start the game with one set of squares in front of you and one in front of the child. Select a square and ask the child to find the square that matches yours. "Can you find the blue square that is the same as this one?" If the child chooses incorrectly, you might



move your square closer to the child's square to help the child see the difference. Say something like, "These two squares are not the same color, look again."

If the child is correct, say, "Yes, these two squares are the same color. Both are blue. Now you choose a color." Once the matching square is identified, have the child place it on the matching square on the board.

If the child is still interested, continue the game until the board is full. Then the child can take off squares that are like the one you are holding. The concepts to be learned in this game are the "same as", color names, shapes, and listening for direction.

Game II

Put the lotto board and a set of squares in front of the child. Ask the child to find a certain color square without showing him or her the square. Once the child has identified the square, ask the child to repeat the color and place the square in the matching square on the board. Repeat with other colors.

If the child had difficulty you will need to pick up your yellow square and say, "Find a yellow square the same color as this square." If the child makes several mistakes, the game may be too hard. Go back to Game I.

As in Game I, once the board is filled ask the child to take off a square of a certain color. Continue until all the squares are removed or until the child is no longer interested in the game.

Summary

Adults who take time to play with preschoolers often enjoy sharing the enthusiasm children have for discovering new information. This is a communication activity, so it is important to talk in terms that the child understands. Talk in complete sentences. Use the color names and phrases such as "the same as" or "not the same as" to reinforce the concepts to be learned. Until they are convinced otherwise, most children think learning is fun.

Feelie Bag

Touch is one of the first ways a child learns. From touching, a child is able to develop a better understanding of the concepts of shape and form. The *Feelie Bag* helps a child recognize shapes by touch as well as by sight.

Talk with, listen to, and encourage the child. Spending time in a shared game can help children gain self-confidence and improve their relationship with a caring adult.

Description

The *Feelie Bag* consists of a drawstring bag and two sets of cut out shapes (circle, square, triangle, and rectangle) made from a strong material such as masonite.

Game I

Put one set of shapes in the bag, the other beside you. Then choose a shape and ask the child to reach into the bag and find the same shape without looking, by *feeling*. This game helps a child learn how shapes look and feel. This helps the child learn to *match* shapes.

Refrain from telling the child, "No, you are wrong." If the child selects a circle to match the square you're holding, compare the two shapes and explain that the shapes don't match. For example, "You have a circle. My shape is a square. They are different. Try again."

If the child selects a shape that matches yours, explain the kind of shape they both are and that they are both alike. Be sure to praise the child for the correct choice. You

can continue this game until all the shapes are out of the bag. If a child confuses the square and rectangle, the rectangle may be withheld until the child's confidence and ability has improved.

Game II

Put one set of the four shapes in plain view of the child. The other set should be hidden from the child's view. Have the child close his or her eyes while you put one of the hidden shapes inside the bag.

Have the child feel the shape inside the bag and, without looking at it, find a shape that is the same. If the child selects a different shape, say, "These shapes are not the same, try again."

Avoiding the word "wrong", will help the child feel confident about making choices. When the child matches the correct shape, hold them close together. "These are the same shape." "They are both circles."

Game III

To help a child identify shapes, pick up each shape and call it by name. "These shapes all have names. This one is a square." Repeat this several times and encourage the child to repeat the name of the shape until you feel the child is becoming aware of the names. Ask the child to look at all the shapes. Then describe a shape to the child, "I'm thinking of a shape that has three straight sides. Can you name it?"

Continue the game making the hints easier or harder depending on the child's ability to identify and name the shape. When the child becomes skilled at the game, you can take turns giving clues.

Summary

Feeling, comparing, identifying, and naming are skills needed throughout life. The *Feelie Bag* provides an enjoyable way to help a child learn to recognize shapes by touch as well as sight.

These games reinforce the concepts of shape and also teaches observation and communication skills. Children need to feel they can solve problems and that their opinions are respected.



We acknowledge and thank Kiwanis-International for their support in publishing this booklet as part of their *Young Children: Priority One* Program.



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Kenneth R. Bolen, Director of Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.



The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources does not discriminate in its academic, admissions and services to the public on the basis of sex, age, race, color, religion, disability, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, or political affiliation.