

The Playwork Curriculum

The Playwork Curriculum suggests that the essential experiences available to children fall into the following categories - The Elements (Fire, Water, Air, Earth), Identity, Concepts and The Senses.

Children need direct and first hand experience of all four elements. They need the opportunity to play with fire, water, air and earth.

Children need to play with their identity, i.e., who they are and what they look like, and with the whole concept of identity. Children need to make sense of a world in which much of what exists is abstract. Children need to be able to explore the world of concepts. This doesn't mean that the concepts have to exist in reality. The environment for children's play should stimulate the senses. Music and sounds, tastes, smells, colours, and different textures should all be available.

Other elements of the child's play environment will provide access to a varied landscape, materials, and opportunities for construction and change. The environment will provide focuses, choices and alternatives, and access to tools, loose parts, challenge and risk.

Fire

BBQ's, enamelling, cooking, kiln, candlemaking, fire-pit/bin, burning rubbish...

Water

Polythene slide, fights, hose, filling bins/pool, watering plants/veg, water bombs, swimming,, sailing boats, tie&dye, making/diverting streams, pools and waterfalls, imaginary pubs, trips to rivers/beach, using pipes/guttering etc. to create waterways...

Air

Windssocks, paper planes, kites, balloons, helicopter/dandelion seeds, frisbees, flags, banners, windmills, zipline, weather vane, windchimes, pumping tyres/balls, jumping off high places, earthballs...

Earth

Clay, gardening, pot-planting, growing veg/plants, digging holes, sandpit, mud pies, mud fights, bughunting, antfarm, making tunnels...

Identity

Facepainting, make-up, hairstyling, dressing up, making outfits, masks, taking photos, making video/film, marking cultural festivals, role-play, mirrors, montages, using skintone paints/fabrics...

Concepts

Conversations on war, birth, death, democracy, justice, peace, crime, punishment, culture, time, space, marriage, religion. Creative play or role-play on any of these using loose parts/props etc. Animals - alive... and dead...

Senses

Music – all types. Blindfold/trust games. Herbs, spices, flowers, Interesting and aesthetic sights & sounds & shapes. Perfumes/smells. Making colours, collage. Food-tasting, cooking.. Varieties of natural textures & colours. Types of lighting, darkness..

Varied Landscape

Structures and structure building, different heights/levels, hills, mounds, trees, platforms, bridges, pits, swings, garden, aerial runway, ditches, tunnels, quieter areas, places to sit, to hide... Open and natural spaces...

Materials

Sports equipment, kiln, TV, computers, oven, BBQ, video, games consoles, pots/pans, tools, soft toys, parachute, inflatables, props galore...

Building

Den-making, sand play, structure-building, camps, fence-making, designing areas, model-making, taking electrical equipment/bikes apart, go-kart/trolley building, float-building for carnival...

Change

Designing of areas/structures, redecorating, murals, pavement art, pond-digging, stream re-routing, digging tunnels...

Focuses

Theme teams/days, BBQ/campfire, inflatables, special events/open days, visiting specialists (arts, dance, circus skills...) New and wacky or unusual resources (eg coloured lights, luminous paint, unicycles, didgeridoo...

Choices

*Suggestion box/board,, consultations, conversations... Wide range of possible options with free access by **all**...*

Alternatives

Trips off-site, residentials, dance classes, sleepovers, sleep-outs, outdoor pursuits...

Tools

Hammers, screwdrivers, saws, nails/screws, drills, chisels, craft knives cutters, staplers, forks/spades, pliers, hoe/rake, shovels, crowbar, axe, brushes, needles, nuts/bolts, clips/pegs, sieves, measures, spirit level...

Loose parts

*Tyres, wood, ropes, tubs, barrels, sheets, blankets, bricks, breeze blocks, pallets, boxes, vessels, wheels, trolleys, mats, crates, cushions, ladders, poles, sticks, tape, pegs..., **See separate page in folder for more ideas***

Risk

Zipline, rope-swing, fire, sharp tools, high structures... climbing, balancing, biking, wrestling, jumping...

Through play children learn about risk. This is an essential element of confidence and competence building, necessary for personal development, flexibility and survival.

Throughout their lives children will be confronted with hazardous situations and it is during their play that children choose to encounter risk, learn to assess it and develop skills to manage it.

Through trial and error they discover their limitations and realise their potential for undertaking challenge. Children are inquisitive and curious, with an innate and compelling drive to explore the unknown, and to experiment and to test themselves