

Play is the key way children learn about themselves, others and the world they live in. It is essential to their learning, development, health, and physical, mental and social well-being – and it's FUN! Play provides the building blocks to be ready for school.



Fun with animals

Babies are fascinated by animals. Real animals hold a baby's attention for longer than toys. Very young children are able to respond to animal movements and sounds; following them with their eyes and making sounds in response to them.

Did you know?

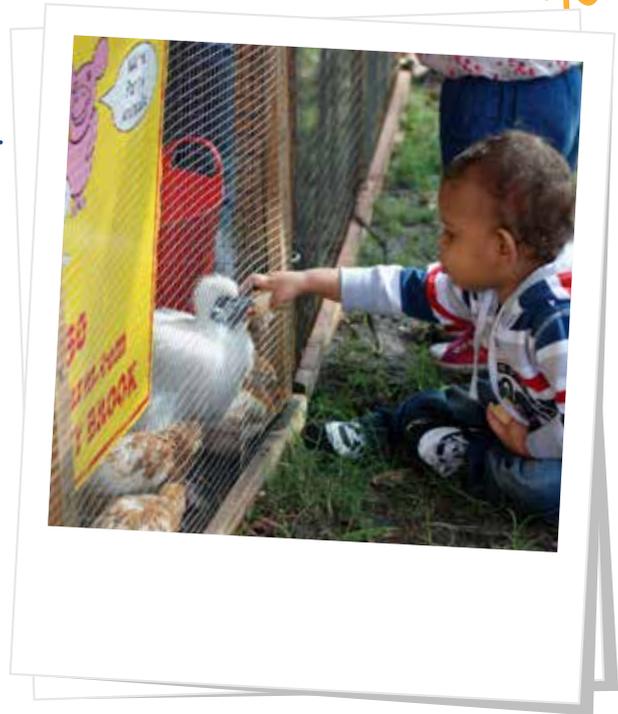
Babies focus on real animals for longer than toys. Your baby's natural interest in animals makes them useful to inspire learning and development e.g. learning to crawl after a cat or dog.

Add language

Your baby's interest in animals can be a focus for building language skills. Animals are great conversation starters. You could name the animal and have fun together making the animal's sound. Remember to pause and give your baby a chance to make a noise or take a turn.

Other development

As your young baby's eye sight develops they will begin to notice the movement of birds and animals moving around them. Following the movement of a bird in flight or a kangaroo moving away helps to develop eye movements (known as tracking).



Variations

Enjoy discovering the different animals you come across when you go for a walk around your local area. Look out for times when your baby shows you they are interested in something they have seen or heard. They might show interest by pointing, making gestures or making a sound.

Safety

Even well-known animals can be unpredictable, as are babies. Close adult supervision reduces health and safety risks to both your baby and the animal.

- Playgroup WA has a treasure trove of play activities for babies, toddlers and 3-5 year olds, for home and playgroup. These play activities cover a balanced diet of play across sensory, movement, language and thinking skill areas.

You can find them at www.playgroupwa.com.au/playideas or visit www.facebook.com/playgroupwa

