

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.



## Winter Play

In winter children need to get outside to run, jump and wiggle using their big muscles. Outdoors in nature provides lots of space for active play and different environments to explore.

### Did you know?

We know that children love jumping in puddles and playing in mud. Winter can be a great time to get your boots on and get outside! They are learning balance and coordination skills while having fun!

### Add language

As toddlers explore the winter world, try making comments like "It's slippery" "What a big puddle". Ask occasional questions e.g. "What's happening?" "What are you doing?" "What does it feel like?". Give simple directions or thinking tasks e.g. "Find one like this". This will help to develop your child's understanding and use of different words.

### Other development

Exploring the world in winter gives lots of opportunity for making discoveries and experimenting. Shaking the branches after it has rained teaches cause and effect. Walking through puddles or running through them teaches different splashes happen with different forces. All this is building science concepts. Noticing differences in sizes, shapes and colours all build early maths concepts.



Counting leaves or sticks or stones you discover helps develop number skills.

Allowing your toddler some space and time to take the lead helps to develop their confidence and self-worth. As they let their imagination run wild, inspired by what they find, they are also developing their social communication skills.

### Variations

Why not make 'leaf boats' and float them in the biggest puddle you can find?

On a really rainy day, why not visit the local library and choose a book or two together. It could even have a nature or winter theme, like "Stormy weather" or "The Very Hungry Caterpillar".

- 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](http://www.playgroupwa.com.au/playideas) or visit [www.facebook.com/playgroupwa](https://www.facebook.com/playgroupwa)