Children learn to cooperate with others through their play and come to understand social relationships through trial and error. As they grow older, children progress through four stages of play. These stages are solitary, parallel, associative, and cooperative play.

Solitary play is the first stage of play in the sequence. Up to 18 months of age, a child plays alone with toys. The child makes no attempts to play with other children or adults nearby. Adults should provide toys that the infant can easily handle alone.

Parallel play is next in the sequence. By about eighteen months of age, the child plays beside, but not with, nearby children. Some children watch others as they play. Other children may not pay attention to children who are nearby. In this stage, children are more interested in their toys than in other children.
Types of Play

Associative Play

Cooperative Play

Associative play occurs when children begin to participate in games or activities together. Most children reach this stage about the age of three or four years. For the first time, an increased interest in peers (other children of approximately the same age) is noticed. Children at this age often share toys. Some materials that encourage associative play are building blocks, art projects that involve more than one child, and musical instruments.

Cooperative play is the form most often seen in middle childhood (ages five and up). This type of play is seen in the games the younger children play, such as red rover and tug of war. Cooperative play also is involved when older children participate in baseball, soccer, or other organized team sports. In these events, children work together to compete against another team. Cooperative play also is encouraged by some computer games, jacks, and yard games. Some children use all forms of play by adding one onto the others as they develop. Other children may stop using one form of play when the form in the next stage develops and replaces it.
### Teaching Strategies for Toddlers from Twelve to Eighteen Months

#### Physical Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Strategy</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encourage use of climbing equipment, such as inclines or sturdy boxes</td>
<td>Helps toddlers develop large muscle coordination and balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a safe area and a target for toddlers to throw small, soft objects</td>
<td>Encourage large and small muscle development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put toys and objects where they can reach, grasp, and move them</td>
<td>Encourage eye-hand coordination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Toddlers from twelve to eighteen months of age are very active as they discover their world. They touch, grasp, move, and taste. Yet toddlers may be frustrated if they cannot complete tasks without help. Teaching strategies must allow for frustrations of toddlers. Why is this important?
The attention span of toddlers is short. They do not spend much time with one activity or toy. They lose interest quickly. Toddlers constantly explore things around them. They gradually become aware that others can cause actions to happen. Toddlers then begin to imitate the behavior of others in their play. They also develop their own play habits as well as copying how others play.

How long is a toddler’s attention span? How does it relate to the attention span of a high school student?
Teaching Strategies for Toddlers from Twelve to Eighteen Months

Social Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Strategy</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide ample materials and toys so sharing may be encouraged but not required</td>
<td>Helps toddlers develop a positive self-concept</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toddlers are self-centered. At this age, toddlers most often play alone or alongside others. They do not interact with each other in play. Often, a toddler’s first social attempt is with a caregiver. Teaching strategies should allow toddlers to play by themselves. Activities should also encourage some positive, sharing interactions with others.

Have you ever been around a self-centered toddler? What is his or her behavior like?
### Teaching Strategies for Toddlers from Twelve to Eighteen Months

#### Cognitive Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Strategy</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hide toys while toddlers watch. Ask them to find the toys. Praise successful efforts. Provide time and materials that encourage toddlers to search and identify the cause of certain actions, such as rolling a ball under a chair.</td>
<td>Helps toddlers develop concept of object permanence. Encourage toddlers to investigate cause and effect relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play sound games. Point out a picture of an animal and make the sound it makes.</td>
<td>Helps toddlers develop vocabulary and encourage talking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching strategies should include hide and go seek games, classification games, reading books, imitation and pretend games, and verbal games. These activities encourage language development.

Do you remember playing the hide and go seek game? Do you remember pointing to a picture of an animal and making the sound it made? These simple games were developing you cognitively.
Toddlers in this age group gain more control over large muscles and continue to develop fine motor skills. They prefer large muscle activities but also enjoy small muscle activities. Emotionally, toddlers begin to fantasize. Their behavior may become more spirited than before. They are more independent, start to share with others, and expand social relationships with others. Object permanence is understood. Vocabulary expands rapidly. Children label and recognize objects. Toddlers at this age begin using mental trial and error rather than physical trial and error.
Physical Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Strategy</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide an area for kicking a ball into a cardboard box or a corner</td>
<td>Encourage large muscle control and coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide a space for fast and slow riding of cycles, turning curves, and riding in circles</td>
<td>Encourage large muscle control and coordination. Helps toddlers develop balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides materials, such as zipper boards and jars with lids, to stimulate manipulation</td>
<td>Help toddlers develop small muscle control and coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide markers and crayons</td>
<td>Encourage small muscle skills and creativity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How can daily routines, such as dressing, feeding, and hygiene be an opportunity for expanding toddlers’ abilities to care for themselves?
### Emotional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Strategy</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicate verbally and nonverbally to toddlers during playtime</td>
<td>Encourage self-expression of emotions and develop self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to toddlers’ fears and fantasies</td>
<td>Help toddlers develop self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow toddlers to show intense swings in emotions and behavior</td>
<td>Help toddlers develop self-esteem and encourage emotional expression and self-control of behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communicate verbally and nonverbally to toddlers that they are loved when they reflect negative or angry feelings.

Listen to toddlers’ fears and fantasies. Comfort or enjoy as appropriate. Accept their fears as real, reassure, convince of harmlessness, or remove objects frightening toddlers if possible.

Allow toddlers to show intense swings in emotions and behavior. Communicate your acceptance of them as individuals. Suggest alternative behavior if needed.
When children are playing with each other, they are developing social skills.

Understand that toddlers think that others feel and think as they do.

Help the toddler identify and express verbally the feelings others show in their behavior.

Encourage and work beside toddlers who want to help clean up. Explain yourself and carefully word requests to avoid toddlers’ negativism.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregiver Strategy</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allow toddler time to work out solutions to puzzles</td>
<td>Help toddlers develop use of mental trial and error skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify ideas or themes in toddlers’ symbolic play that seem important to them</td>
<td>Help identify areas important to fulfilling the toddlers’ needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize meanings of toddlers’ use of words</td>
<td>Provide insight into the toddlers’ meaning of different words and concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patiently answer toddlers’ questions in simple, clear, short sentences</td>
<td>Help toddlers develop proper language skills through imitation of positive model</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Allow toddlers time to work out solutions to puzzles. Offer clues to help only if asked for assistance.

Identify ideas or themes in toddlers’ symbolic play that seem important to them.

Recognize meanings of toddlers’ use of words. Take care not to read extra meanings into what they are really saying.

Patiently answer toddlers’ questions in simple, clear, short sentences.
Eighteen to twenty-four months:
Almost anything that is open on two ends can become a child’s telescope. Use paper towel tubes, empty cracker boxes, or just roll a few sheets of paper and tape them together. Children can look through the telescope for things around the room or yard. Offer variations by asking children to look for specific items, colors, shapes, or categories. For example, “Do you see anything yellow? Do you see any plants? Describe what you see.”

What are some other toys or equipment which has cognitive connections for children at this age?
Twenty-four to thirty months:
Physical Development
• Play with toddlers. Observe safety and appropriateness of materials and the play area. The objective is that it develops flexibility and encourages use of large motor skills.
• Make up rhymes and songs to which toddlers can clap, dance, and sing along. This helps toddlers develop rhythm and balance.

Emotional Development
Provide experiences where toddlers can succeed often and feel good about them. This encourages feelings of positive self-worth.

Social Development
Provide materials that require sharing. Praise toddlers who share their toys or materials. This encourages sharing and development of positive social skills.

Cognitive and Language Development
Allow toddlers to create their own classifications of actions, objects, or behaviors. Reinforce their observations. Question if clarification is needed. This encourages development of mental ability to sort and define.

Teaching strategies for toddlers twenty-four to thirty months should emphasize all the skills being developed in the twelve to eighteen-month period in addition to teaching self-help skills.
Twenty-four to thirty-six months:
Children can use puppets to tell stories and act out ideas. Make hand puppets from a variety of materials (such as paper, socks, cloth, and scraps of fabric) or make a hand-held puppet by gluing a picture to a stick. Decorations bring a puppet to life. For example, draw a face with markers, glue on pictures from a magazine, or adorn puppets with string or yarn.

What are some other toys or equipment which has cognitive connections for children at this age?
Thirty to thirty-six months:

Physical Development
Play games and sing songs which include jumping, clapping, running in place, and walking. This encourages development of large muscle control.

Emotional Development
Reinforce toddlers’ excitement with learning. Provide challenging materials, toys, and experiences which they need to use often to master. This encourages enthusiasm and helps develop mastery of skills.

Social Development
Use daily routines to help control wait time (Example: taking turns using a toy). This helps toddlers develop the ability to wait for needs to be met.

Cognitive and Language Development
Have toddlers use art to represent objects, feelings, or ideas. Listen to their explanation of pictures. This encourages toddlers the ability to think symbolically.

Teaching strategies for thirty to thirty-six-month age group should continue to emphasize strategies in the previous stage with more emphasis on development of self-confidence and abilities to complete self-help skills.
Play, Literacy, and Development

Play activities which promote toddler growth and development should include:
• mathematics
• Science
• physical movement
• outdoor play
• Art
• music

Below are some play activities for a toddler’s growth and development:

• Math – Toddlers can learn colors and shapes using puzzles.
• Science – Toddlers learn to place things in categories (sort and classify)
• Physical movement – Encourage use of climbing equipment, such as padded inclines and sturdy boxes.
• Outdoor play – Encourage kicking a ball by providing an area outside to kick the ball in a corner or a cardboard box.
• Art – Provide markers and paper for the child to make marks. Use art to represent objects, feelings, and ideas.
• Music – Make up rhymes and songs to which toddlers can clap, dance, and sing along to. This helps toddlers develop rhythm and balance

Explain the factors which contribute to literacy in toddlers.

What was your favorite indoor learning center as a child and why? Why are learning centers fun for children?
Role of Play in Growth and Development of the Preschool Child

Preschoolers are children who are three, four, and five years old. Preschools are like scientists. They wonder about themselves and their world. Essentially, play is the work of children. Playing for children is learning. They learn from coming in contact with objects, people, and events. While children play, they explore the world around them through various types of play such as cooperative, dramatic, and manipulative.

Caregivers should plan teaching strategies which offer a variety of different learning activities set up to achieve specific goals and objectives in the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of children. The process children use in playing and discovering in learning centers is more important than the end product. Indoor learning centers might include activity areas for:

- art
- blocks
- computer, science
- dramatic play
- language arts
- manipulative play
- math
- music
- quiet time
Indoor learning center activities offer an opportunity for children to develop some of the following skills:
• eye-hand coordination
• motor skills
• creativity
• sensory abilities
• language
• number skills
• task completion
• communication
• the enjoyment of singing, listening, and moving to music

Outdoor learning centers might include wheel toys, sand and water, climbing, swinging, and quiet time, which offer opportunities for the development of fine and gross motor skills, social skills, creative expression, a sense of accomplishment, and sensory experiences.

What is the role of play in a preschool child's growth and development?

Teaching strategies for three-year-olds should include large muscle activities done with music, activities which aid development of balance, scribbling and drawing activities, toys which require sharing, activities to stimulate imagination and imitation and concrete learning experiences.

Teaching strategies for four-year-olds should emphasize large and small muscle development, accepting responsibilities, positive behaviors, classification of objects, and memory games.

Teaching strategies for five-year-olds should help them develop and refine large and small motor skills, encourage them to express their feelings, help them develop self-confidence, encourage development of problem solving skills, and encourage creative development.

What was your favorite outdoor learning center as a child and why?
Language and General Knowledge:
Children can develop language skills only if they have many opportunities to talk, listen and use language to solve problems and learn about the world. Long before your child enters school, you can do many things to help her develop language. You can give your child opportunities to play. Play is how children learn. It is the natural way for them to explore, to become creative, to learn to make up and tell stories and to develop social skills. Play also helps children learn to solve problems. For example, if his or her wagon tips over, the child must figure out how to get it upright again. When they stack up blocks, children learn about colors, numbers, geometry, shapes and balance. Playing with others helps children learn how to negotiate.
Language and General Knowledge:
Children can develop language skills only if they have many opportunities to talk, listen and use language to solve problems and learn about the world. Long before your child enters school, you can do many things to help her develop language. You can support and guide your child as she learns a new activity. Parents can help children learn how to do new things by “scaffolding,” or guiding their efforts. For example, as you and your toddler put together a puzzle, you might point to a piece and say, “I think this is the piece we need for this space. Why don’t you try it?” Then have the child pick up the piece and place it correctly. As the child becomes more aware of how the pieces fit into the puzzle, you can gradually withdraw your support.
During the years between ages six and twelve, school-age children progress from dependent first graders to independent early adolescents. Their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive skills develop quickly during this time, which is called the school-age years or middle childhood. The school-age years are filled with fun, school, family, friends, and other activities. In the beginning of this phase, children are often experiencing being away from their homes on a daily basis for the entire day for the first time and by the end they are self-competent. These changes range from physical, emotional, social, and intellectual.

Appropriate Development Activities:

Appropriate development activities for school-age children should include several strategies. These children are:

• learning to see things from the viewpoint of others
• using deductive and inductive reasoning
• noting transformations
• focusing on more than one part

Due to the fact that these children are learning so quickly, activities should be well planned and organized so that the children will expand their knowledge and progress at an appropriate rate.
Physically they grow and develop into adolescents during these years. Emotionally, socially and intellectually these years shape their personalities and self-identity. Children rapidly gain an understanding of life and the world around them during this phase in life. The level of self-competence is based on experiences and the success rate of learning.
Teaching strategies for school-age children should include arts and crafts, creative drama, games, living things, music and movement, puppets, project boxes, and storytelling.

What were your favorite school-age activities and why?
The Crucial Role of Play in Early Childhood

This video was created to demonstrate the importance of play for young children. The slide show is set to "Upside down" by Jack Johnson.

http://youtu.be/8KtUhKVfJJI
Promoting Healthy Brain Development: You Can Make a Difference
Learn how you can make a difference in young children's brain development through everyday activities. Visit www.bbbgeorgia.org for more information.
http://youtu.be/prbLhqBsx4M
A caregiver should prepare children for a child with special needs by openly discussing the special needs of the child. Awareness activities can be provided to explain the child’s disability. A caregiver and the children can rearrange the room to meet the child’s needs. If the child is in a wheelchair, spaces left between furnishings should be wide enough for the child to move freely around the room.

It is a good idea to have regular activities to teach children about various special needs. This can be done even when a child with special needs is only one part of a child’s life. Children with or without disabilities can be good friends and enjoy playing together.

There should be enough play equipment and materials so that children do not have to wait too long for their turns.

Promote positive interactions by providing materials and learning experiences which encourage cooperation. Such materials as blocks, dramatic play props, and table games encourage children to play together. Plan learning experiences that give children a chance to interact positively.
Special Needs Kids and the Power of Play
Video demonstrating the healing power of fun and toys for children with disabilities and their families.
http://youtu.be/pWwW7PTB_w
Reading to young children promotes language acquisition and is linked with literacy development and, later on, with achievement in reading comprehension and overall success in school. The percentage of young children read to daily by a family member is one indicator of how well young children are being prepared for school.

Mathematics and reading achievement:
The extent and content of students’ knowledge, as well as their ability to think, learn, and communicate, affect their likelihood of becoming productive adults and active citizens. Mathematics and reading achievement test scores are important measures of students’ skills in these subject areas and good indicators of overall achievement in school.

How often were you read to as a child? What were some of your favorite children’s books?
References and Resources

Textbook:

Websites:
- AblePlay: A toy rating system and website that provides comprehensive information on toys for children with special needs. AblePlay was created as a way to make toys more accessible and functional in the lives of children with disabilities. http://www.ableplay.org/content/search

Microsoft Clip Art: Used with permission from Microsoft.

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The Importance of Play: Toddler to School-Age

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References and Resources

YouTube™:
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