



What is Play?



Play Scotland works to promote the importance of play for all children and young people, and campaigns to create increased play opportunities in the community.

WHAT IS PLAY

Much has been written about play. One of the most enduring definitions is Susan Isaacs:

“play encompasses children’s behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward, and is a fundamental and integral part of healthy development - not only for individual children, but also for the society in which they live”.

However, there is no clear definition that will cover all meanings given by the different people who are involved with children: parents, early years practitioners, playworkers, teachers even children themselves.

In play we are not talking about an “end product”, but a process which happens when children play. Succinctly put by Russell and Lester in Play for a Change - “If policy makers accept the significance of play for children’s well-being and development, then play provision should be judged on whether it enables children to play rather than on more instrumental outcomes.”

(Russell and Lester in Play for a Change- September 2008)

Another widely used definition is “what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons”.

(Getting Serious About Play, DCMS)

As one child quoted when asked about play they responded:

“it’s what I do when everyone else has stopped telling me what to do”

In response to the same question another child said

“sometimes I make stuff, sometimes I like to play games, sometimes I like messing about, sometimes I don’t like doing anything”.

These are all crucial elements of play. This important and necessary aspect of play is often misunderstood by adults.





SOME MORE DEFINITIONS OF PLAY...

“Play is a uniquely adaptive act...with a special function of its own human experience” (*Johan Huizinga 1938 in Homo Ludens*)

“The ideal parent wants strong, resilient, bright eyed, fearless children.”
(*Tom Hodgkinson 2009*)

“The human need to play is a powerful one. When we ignore it, we feel there is something missing in our lives.”
(*Leo Buscaglia*)

“Children are living a more sedentary life for a number of reasons including the growth of children’s tv, video games and parental concerns about the risk of “stranger danger” or physical harm while playing what used to be normal childhood games.” (*Sue Palmer, Author, 2008*)

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world...” (*Albert Einstein, 1929*)

“When playing, children choose what to do, how to do it and who to do it with. Play takes many forms: doing nothing in particular: doing lots: being boisterous: showing off: being contemplative: being alone: being social: being challenged: being thwarted: overcoming difficulties. Through play, children explore the world and learn to take responsibility for their own choices” (*Design for Play, Play England, 2008*)

WHO WE ARE

Play Scotland, formed in 1998, is a membership organisation and registered charity funded by the Scottish Government to make the child's right to play a reality in Scotland. A good play experience is **every child's right and benefits the whole community.**

'State parties recognise the right of every child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.'

Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 31:

Play Scotland has a range of membership services available:

- **A members only section of the website with information on funders, resources, job vacancies and members directory**
- **Monthly bulletins and news with up to date play related items**
- **Regular newsletters on key topics**
- **Discounted entry to Play Scotland conferences, forum and events**
- **Online access to GRANTnet Funding search engine**

Further information on membership is available at **www.playscotland.org**



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