

MINOT INFANT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER



Play is *more* than fun. It's how children learn about the world. During play, children practice creativity, communication, problem-solving, and emotional skills. In April, we're celebrating the power of play and how it supports development.

Types of Play By Age

0-3 months: *Unoccupied play* → moving their arms, legs, hands, feet, etc.

6-12 months: *Exploratory play* → mouthing, banging, dropping objects to see what happens

12-18 months: *Functional play* → using objects as intended (pushing cars, stacking blocks)

18-24 months: *Early pretend play* → pretending to talk on the phone, feed a doll

24-36 months: *Symbolic play* → using an object as another (block as a phone), simple pretend play

Parallel play (playing near but not directly with others) is typical and healthy for toddlers!

Try This At Home

Sit nearby and **watch** what they do for a few minutes

Comment on what you notice: "You're stacking those blocks so carefully," or "That toy makes a funny sound!"

If invited, join in by **following their lead** (e.g., if they hand you a toy, accept it and respond)

Ask **open-ended questions**: "What happens next?" or "What's this one doing?"

Resist the urge to teach or correct; just be present and engaged

REMEMBER: A few minutes of [child-led play](#) is *more valuable* than an hour of an adult-directed activity they're not interested in.

Simple Play Ideas

← Click me!

You don't need fancy toys for meaningful play. Here are some ideas using what you already have:

Pots, pans, & wooden spoons for music-making

Plastic containers & lids for stacking & nesting

Cooked pasta or rice in a bin for scooping

Blankets/pillows for building forts or cozy spaces

Empty food boxes & containers for "cooking"

Old clothes, hats, or scarves for dress-up

Stuffed animals for caring & nurturing play

Toy cars/animals for imaginary scenarios

Keep it simple. Let their imagination do the real work!

Pyramid Model Spotlight

Play supports many parts of the [Pyramid Model](#).

When we play with children, we:

- Build strong, *nurturing* relationships
- Create environments where children feel *safe* to try new things
- Teach *social-emotional skills* like taking turns, solving problems, etc
- Support *communication*

Playing together builds connection and trust. When caregivers are responsive and playful, children develop skills and confidence.

Research shows: Children learn best through play, especially when caring adults are involved. Read more [here](#) and [here](#).

Tip of the Month:

Follow Your Child's Lead

When you join in play by watching and reacting to what your child is interested in (without trying to control the activity), they will feel supported and involved.

There's no "*right*" way to play, but by letting your child take the lead, you're showing them that their ideas are important and that they have control and freedom in play.

What Children Learn During Play

Play isn't just play. It builds essential skills.

Cognitive skills: Problem-solving, cause and effect, spatial awareness, memory

Language skills: New vocabulary, conversation, storytelling

Motor skills: Fine motor control, coordination, body awareness

Social-emotional skills: Sharing, turn-taking, emotional expression, empathy

Creativity: Imagination, flexible thinking, innovation

When your child is playing, you're watching their brain build connections! Read more [here](#).

Resource Corner

Screen Time Note: The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) guidelines say that infants under 18 months do not learn from screen time, but it is not harmful for them to occasionally watch brief high-quality videos (e.g., PBS KIDS, Sesame Street, etc.). They created [the five Cs](#) for screen time in young children.

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Minot Infant Development Program

Part C North Dakota PYRAMID MODEL

