



Around The Neighborhood

Fall/1993

A Newsletter for People Who Care For Young Children

Special Issue on Play

Play is essential for children. Imaginative play has always been an important part of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. This issue focuses on the value of play and the many ways parents and providers can encourage play.

Play and Learning Go Hand-In-Hand!

People often talk about play as if it were a relief from serious learning or a "waste of time." But for children, play is serious learning. It is a way for them to learn who they are, how the world works, and how to express feelings.

There is a lot of emphasis today on school readiness. Only a small part of readiness has to do with ABC's and counting to 10. To be ready for school, children need such things as self-esteem, self-control, symbolic thinking, and the ability to cope with their feelings. Play is the most natural way for children to develop in all of those areas. So when you make sure there's time for play each day, you are helping them be ready for school!

Here are some ways that play and learning go hand-in-hand:

Self-Esteem

"One more block makes the tower tumble...a little more water makes the cup overflow...the things I do make other things happen. Look what I can do!"

The most important foundation that children can bring to school is feeling good about themselves. We need to tell children they are special, but that message is even stronger when children feel it inside themselves when they have successes through their day. Play is such a good way for children to know, "I can do it!"

Self-Control

"Sit still...follow directions...no talking now." Those are all familiar phrases in kindergarten and first grade. Being able to follow the rules and learning to wait are important things children need in order to manage in a classroom.

These children may look like they're "just playing," but, in fact, they're learning lots of skills they will need for school.

For many reasons two year olds and three year olds can't sit still and be quiet. But when they play, they develop self-control. Through play they learn how to take turns, share, negotiate, accept limits, wait, work cooperatively, see things from someone else's point of view, try again, and put things away where they belong. Almost all forms of play give a child a chance to practice one or more of these abilities.

Using Symbols

Reading may be the single most important task children learn at school. Play helps children develop the basic tool they'll need for learning to read: symbolic thinking.

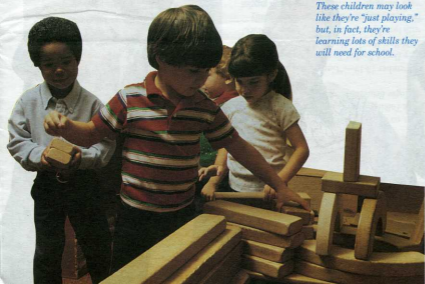
When preschoolers play, they often use one thing to stand for something else. For example, they might use a pie pan for a steering wheel. They're using the pie pan as a symbol that stands for something else — a steering wheel. When children learn to read, they need to understand that words on a page are symbols that stand for something else. For instance, the word CAT stands for the animal that we know of as a cat.

Children who can play symbolically are more likely to make connections between words on a page and the ideas that those words represent.

Emotional Coping

Difficult times at home because of such things as a new baby, unemployment, or divorce often leave children with deep and confusing feelings. Just like adults, when children are upset, they can be so tangled in their feelings that they aren't able to concentrate or pay attention.

Of course, providers can't be therapists, but they can help by making sure children have time to play and that they have playthings like blocks, cars, dress-up clothes, dolls or stuffed animals, and family figures. When children can express their feelings through play, they have a valuable tool for managing whatever stormy times may be ahead.



Dear Parents and Providers,

A young boy we know often wore a superhero cape when he was playing. His child care provider learned how important that pretending was for him when she heard that he insisted on wearing the cape for his checkup at the doctor's office. The cape really did help him feel stronger.

Much of children's pretending and play is dictated by their inner needs. Play allows them to work on what's close to their hearts, but from a safe distance. For many children, pretending is one of the most important tools for dealing with everyday life.

So it's not surprising that many children would need to imagine and play about being big and strong superheroes*. In their world, they may often feel little and powerless. As the smallest human beings in their communities, children have probably always wished for superhuman powers. Cave children probably pretended to be superhunters or huge powerful beasts.

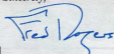
Sometimes superhero play can be about "good guys" versus "bad guys." All children have times when they want to do "bad things" (things they've been told they must not do), and they realize they have to learn control. When children control the "bad guys" in their play, by pretending to kill them or lock them in jail, they are probably working on developing their own inside controls for times when they feel like doing bad things — and need to stop.

Superhero play can sometimes be upsetting for parents and teachers. It can remind us of times when we were small and felt very powerless; but, also, superhero fights can turn into real punching and kicking. At times like that, we need to stop the fighting and help children know that we won't let anyone hurt anyone else while they're in our care. We can also let children know that the superhero fighting on television and movies may look quite real, but it's only pretend.

When a group of children's pretending gets too scary for them, you can actually help them ask for the play to stop. You can also help them redirect the play by encouraging them to make homes or food or hospitals for their make-believe superheroes.

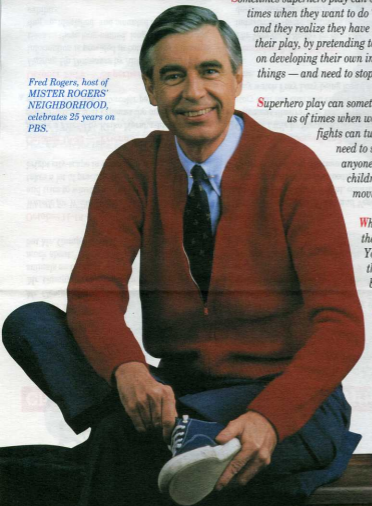
While children might enjoy pretending about being super strong and super big, they also need to know it's real people who do all the important things in the world . . . and as they grow, they will be able to accomplish important things — just as they are.

Sincerely,



*The week about SUPERHEROES (#1466-1470) is scheduled to be broadcast October 25-29, just before Halloween when children are thinking about costumes and pretending. Check with your local PBS station for the exact dates and times.

Fred Rogers, host of MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD, celebrates 25 years on PBS.



Children don't "just play." When they play, they are learning — about themselves, about other people, and about how the world works. All of those are important for when they go to school.

The best kind of toys are the ones that let children play with them in lots of different ways. That way they can play about whatever is important to them at that moment.

Blocks, dolls, and cars have always been popular because these toys help young children feel in charge without actually being in charge.

Children also like toys that allow them to play about being grownups.

Whether you are thinking of making a toy for your child or buying one, here are some ideas about playthings for each age group. Of course, safety is always the most important thing to consider. Because young children tend to put things in their mouth, be sure to avoid small objects that could cause choking.

Infants (0-12 months)

- soft, cuddly toys
- lightweight rattles
- cloth or lightweight balls like a beach ball
- cloth or cardboard books
- toys to explore (blocks or teething rings)
- toys to bang (wooden spoon and an oatmeal box or simple drum)
- toys that roll (with things that move inside as they roll)

Younger Toddlers (12-30 months)

- cardboard blocks for stacking and knocking down
- sturdy toy cars or trucks
- baby dolls, blankets, baby bottles
- containers for filling and dumping
- balls
- wooden or plastic trains
- riding toys (without pedals)
- sturdy picture books
- pull toys
- pop-up toys
- snap-together toys
- hinged toys that open and close
- toys that stack or fit inside each other

Older Toddlers (30-36 months)

- add to the above list for younger toddlers:
- art materials — stickers, glue, tempera paints with big brushes
- easy puzzles
- simple basic dress-up things, like hats, shoes, and vests
- keys

Preschoolers (3-5 years)

- blocks
- toy cars and trucks
- toy people, furniture, animals
- dress-up clothes
- modeling dough, cookie cutters
- toy cooking utensils, like pots and pans
- puppets
- safe tools
- picture books and storybooks
- dolls, strollers, and doll clothes
- construction toys
- simple puzzles
- art materials — crayons, markers, paper, glue, scissors, tape, tempera paints with big brushes

**MISTER
ROGERS'
NEIGHBORHOOD**

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood is produced by Family Communications, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation that produces audio, video and print materials designed to encourage communication between children and adults. For more information and a catalog, please write or call; Family Communications, Inc., Dept. A, 4802 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213; 412-687-2990.

Play and pretend have always been an important part of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. On each program Mister Rogers deals with something that matters in childhood, like birthdays, jealousy, or fears. He doesn't just talk about those things, he **plays** about them — in lots of ways.

For example, when Mister Rogers talks about when a parent goes to work, he may play with a toy truck, making it go away somewhere but always making it come back again. That kind of play can help a child come to feel reassured that loved ones who have to leave for a while will come back.

When children see Mister Rogers play about things like that, they may be more likely to use their own play as a way to deal with their everyday world.

The Neighborhood of Make-Believe

After Mister Rogers has shown something, he plays about it in another way: he introduces that same thing or theme into a puppet story in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe. Children often play like that, too, using whatever is happening in their lives for their pretending.

The Neighborhood of Make-Believe is a puppet kingdom headed by the royal family — King Friday XIII, Queen Sara, and Prince Tuesday. This puppet family expresses many feelings that may be similar to children's feelings about their own families, like how it might feel when parents get angry with the children or with each other.

The puppets have recognizable personalities: Corney, a busy factory owner who manufactures ROCKITS (rocking chairs!), X the Owl who loves to learn, and his next-door neighbor, Henrietta Pussycat, who is shy and feminine. Adventurous and outspoken Lady Elaine takes care of the Museum-Go-Round. Daniel Striped Tiger is gentle and lovable.

People also visit there, like Betty Aberlin, Handyman Negri, Mr. McFeely (the "Speedy Delivery" man), Mayor Maggie and her assistant Chuck Aber, Chef Brockett, and Robert Troll. As caring friends, they work together with the puppets to deal with whatever happens there.

Like all of us, the puppet characters have strengths and weaknesses. They often learn to overcome their weaknesses, especially when they have the support of a helpful neighbor.

For example, in the week about NO AND YES (#1541-1545 scheduled for December 13-17), Daniel feels too shy to be a ring-bearer at a wedding. When Lady Aberlin helps him understand about what worries him, he finds that he's braver than he thought.

When you talk with the children about the puppet stories in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, you can help them recognize their own feelings and be better able to handle those situations in the future.

Back in Mister Rogers' Neighborhood

After the Make-Believe segment, Mister Rogers helps children think about what happened there and how the puppets or people may have felt.

All of the parts of the program are thoughtfully connected. And child care providers can find the connections to the theme that work best for the children in their care — for talking about their real experiences and encouraging their play experiences.

MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD
CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP

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For more information about the project contact your local public television station or Family Communications.

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MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIP



Check 'Em Out! — Books To Share With Children

October 1 — “Opera”

Grandfather Twilight by Barbara Berger. A gentle story about the time between day and night is illuminated by soft, glowing colors.

October 4-8 — “Discipline”

Mr. Gumpy's Outing by John Burningham. Mr. Gumpy takes an assortment of children and animals on his boat, warning all of them “not to muck about.” They do, of course, and tip the boat, but Mr. Gumpy takes the crew home for tea.

October 11-15 — “Pets”

Whistle for Willie by Ezra Jack Keats. Peter tries and tries to whistle for his dog, but finds that it takes a lot of practice. Keats' bold collage depicts a bright city-scape in which Peter and Willie play.

October 18-22 — “Friends”

I Have a Friend by Keiko Narahashi. A delicate, sensitive book that explores the mysteries of shadows with soft watercolor paintings.

October 25-29 — “Superheroes”

Digging Up Dinosaurs by Ailiki. A wealth of information is provided in both text and illustrations as these long-named, long-dead beasts are dug up, identified, and mounted in museum exhibits.

November 1-5 — “Creativity”

Moo, Baa, La La La by Sandra Boynton. This board book mixes silly rhymes with even sillier animals; pigs who sing “La La La” and other barnyard comics will have listeners in stitches.

November 8-12 — “Divorce”

Divorce is a Grownup Problem by Janet Sinberg. This is a caring book that helps children know the divorce isn't their fault and that they will always be loved. It can be helpful for parents, too.

Using the Library

Besides these suggestions, you might want to take advantage of your local library and consider a field trip there. Here are some ideas about that from Dr. Kimmel:

The best way is to begin by making a relationship with the librarian. You might even want to invite her to your center or child care home, so she can get to know your situation.

Also, on #1469, author Earl Grollman shows his book *Talking About Divorce and Separations: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child*.

November 15-19 — “Games”

Play-Day: A Book of Terse Verse by Bruce McMillan. Photos of backyard play are combined with two rhyming words like blue/shoe or duck/truck. The antics of the children and the silly word combinations will be sure to set off giggles galore.

November 22-26 — “Food”

Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z by Lois Ehlart. Bright, colorful alphabetic arrangements of various foods, from apples to zucchini, provide a delicious treat for all.

November 29-December 3 — “Conflict”

Chicken Little by Steven Kellogg. Bright, humorous illustrations help to retell this old story that has charmed children for decades as they watch Foxy Loxy being fooled one more time.

December 6-10 — “Work”

The Very Busy Spider by Eric Carle. An industrious spider continues to spin her web despite attempts of barnyard neighbors to distract her.

December 13-17 — “No and Yes”

The Big Alfie and Annie Rose Storybook by Shirley Hughes. Alfie is full of “vinegar and vim,” and everywhere that Alfie goes, his baby sister Annie Rose is not far behind — including the wedding at which Alfie is ring-bearer and Annie Rose, the uninvited guest.

Since the librarian has probably had experience with groups of children at the library, she might be able to give you some ideas that can help smooth your visit there.

She may suggest times in her day that would be best for your field trip.

December 20-24 — “Grandparents”

More More More Said the Baby by Vera Williams. Exuberant moments that parents and grandparents share with babies are captured in the colorful double-spread pages.



Opera for Granddad

One way to play is to make up stories — musical ones! The week about GRANDPARENTS ends with a musical story called GRANDDAD FOR DANIEL for program #1535, scheduled for December 24. The children might want to play about their own musical stories.

On #1531 Mister Rogers shows a book about trolleys, called *Western Pennsylvania Railways*. On #1533 he has the book *Tools* by Ken Robbins.

December 27-31 — “Music”

All Night, All Day: A Child's First Book of African-American Spirituals by Ashley Bryan. A collection of favorite African-American spirituals with notable illustrations by the collector. The musical notation is easy to play; the melodies are time-honored.

Special thanks to Dr. Margaret Kimmel of the University of Pittsburgh School of Library Science for suggesting these books for our newsletter.

Think about asking the librarian for books that might help a child who is going through a new or difficult experience or when there's something specific you want to talk about with the children. Librarians can be a handy resource for you, all through the year, and they like to be of help to the people in their communities, especially to people like you who work with children.

Highlights of Coming Programs



▲ Dinosaur and Daniel

Someone is pretending to be a dinosaur in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe! There's other dinosaur play, too, during the week about SUPERHEROES (#1466-1470, scheduled for October 25-29).

▼ Mister Rogers and a Robot

Mister Rogers visits a factory where people make robots on program #1513 (to be broadcast November 17) during the week on GAMES. Playing games can help children learn about winning and losing.



▼ Ella and Rhythms

Folksinger Ella Jenkins and Chuck Aber show Mister Rogers hand rhythms on program #1548, scheduled for December 29 in the week about MUSIC. Children love the rhythms of words in stories and poems. That's a way for them to play with sounds.



Neighborhood Poster

October • November • December/1993

How To Use The Broadcast Schedule

The broadcast schedule identifies the *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* programs that PBS stations broadcast on specific dates. (Check with your local PBS station to find out if it broadcasts *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* on dates different from those shown on this schedule.) The schedule also shows the theme for each week of programs and some of the events occurring in each episode.

The specific episode number (for instance, "#1475" for October 1st) corresponds to the program description and activities in the **Mister Rogers' Plan & Play Book**. The **Plan & Play Book** contains easy and appropriate activities for preschoolers. It also contains words to many of the songs from *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* and a special section with recipes and how-to's.



Copies may be ordered from your local public television station or Family Communications.

October	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
This Week: MAKING AN OPERA					1 #1475 Neighborhood Opera "Windstorm in Bubbleland"
	4 #1491 Trying & Practicing; How People Make Piano Rolls	5 #1492 Feeling Frustrated; How People Make Dolls	6 #1493 Feeling Promises; Mister Rogers Goes Swimming	7 #1494 Practicing; Olympian Peggy Fleming Skates	8 #1495 Feeling Secure; How People Make Blankets
This Week: DISCIPLINE	11 #1496 Making Stuffed Animals & Toys	12 #1497 Children Who Love Their Pets; Responsibility	13 #1498 Caring for Neighbor's Dog; a Parrot	14 #1499 Walking a Dog; Asking Friends for Help	15 #1500 Pandas at the Zoo; Quiet Birthday Fun
	18 #1506 Sharing Can Be Hard; Visit to a Shoe Store	19 #1507 Musical Games; Talking About Feelings	20 #1508 Visiting Restaurants; Anger & Apologies	21 #1509 Even Friends Forget; Fire & Drum Music	22 #1510 Friendship is Important — for Caring & Fun
This Week: PETS	25 #1486 Only Birds & Bats & Bugs Can Fly	26 #1487 Dinosaur Exhibit — Carnegie Museum; Vegetable Treats	27 #1468 Dreams Can Be Scary, But They're Not Real	28 #1469 Dressing Up Doesn't Change the Person Inside	29 #1470 Mister Rogers Rides a Back Hoe
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November**Monday****Tuesday****Wednesday****Thursday****Friday****1****This Week:
CREATIVITY**#1501
How People
Make — and
Play — Spoons**2**#1502
A Visit to
the Hospital
Emergency Room**3**#1503
Staying Safe;
Wearing
Seatbelts**4**#1504
It Can Be
Hard to Wait;
Making Popcorn**5**#1505
A Musical Story
by Fred Rogers:
"Spoon Mountain"**8****This Week:
DIVORCE**#1476
Divorce is a
Grown-up Matter;
McFeely Wedding**9**#1477
How People
Make Pretzels;
Feeling Pulled**10**#1478
Electric Cars &
Electric
Wheelchairs**11**#1479
Feelings about
Divorce; What Can
Be Repaired**12**#1480
Real Feelings &
False Faces; Going
on an Airplane**15****This Week:
GAMES**#1511
You Can't Always
Win; How People
Make Towels**16**#1512
You Don't Always
Have to Play Games;
Hide and Go Seek**17**#1513
Only People Have
Feelings; How People
Make Robots**18**#1514
It Takes Practice
to Play Games &
Make Fancy Cakes**19**#1515
Board Games &
Musical Fun from
Ella Jenkins**22****This Week:
FOOD**#1536
How People
Make Applesauce;
Feeling Hungry**23**#1537
How People
Make Tofu; Sharing
Food with Others**24**#1538
Chef Brackett
Makes Peanut
Butter Snack**25**#1539
Truth Even Though
Disappointed;
Vegetable Soup**26**#1540
Costa's Homemade
Spaghetti;
Friendship**29****This Week:
CONFLICT**#1521
There Are Many
Ways to Solve
a Problem**30**#1522
How People
Make Money
at the U.S. Mint**December****Monday****Tuesday****Wednesday****Thursday****Friday****1****This Week:
CONFLICT**#1529
Communication:
Braille & Cave
Drawings**2**#1534
How People
Make Marbles;
Building Bridges**3**#1525
How People
Make
Record Players**6****This Week:
WORK**#1526
How People Make
Stamps; Spending
Money Wisely**7**#1527
Visiting a
Dairy Farm;
Waiting**8**#1528
Fixing Things;
Working for
Good Changes**9**#1529
Grocery Shopping;
Nobody Can
Afford Everything**10**#1530
Mister Rogers Shows
the T.V. Studio
Where He Works**13****This Week:
NO AND YES**#1541
Portrait Artist —
Dianne Dengel;
Wedding Plans**14**#1542
How People Make
Tricycles;
Staying Safe**15**#1543
Christie Thompson
Talks about
Disabilities**16**#1544
Ring-Bearer
Fears, When
Parents Say No**17**#1545
Wedding in
Make-Believe;
Potter at Work**20****This Week:
GRANDPARENTS**#1501
Trolley Museum;
Homemade Trolley;
Pretending**21**#1532
Straw Factory;
Family Photos;
Wind Chimes**22**#1533
Being with
Grandparents;
Antique Car**23**#1534
Grandparent Names;
Neighborhood
Opera Plans**24**#1535
Neighborhood
Opera; Granddad
for Daniel**27****This Week:
MUSIC**#1546
A Young Pianist;
Costa's Music
Behind-the-Scenes**28**#1547
Cellist Yo-Yo Ma;
How People Make
Bass Violins**29**#1548
Ella Jenkins &
Hand Rhythm
Games**30**#1549
The Empire
Bass Quintet;
Creative Ideas**31**#1550
Happy & Sad
Music; Bass
Violin Festival