The Child Unplugged

THE CURIOUS EXPLORER BOOK

Simple play ideas to connect.
Explore & Support yours babies developmenr

11
Simple Play Ideas



0-12 Months

@TheChildUnplugged. | www.TheChildUnplugged.com

Introduction

Children enjoy exploring the world through independent, self-directed play. These activities introduce early concepts of playing alone, making choices, exploring materials, and discovering how things work in a fun and engaging way.
Children play at their own pace, focus on their own ideas, and interact with materials independently while learning how to stay engaged, make decisions, and explore without constant guidance. It's not about doing things together, but about building confidence, curiosity, and independence through solo play.
This builds early skills in independence, concentration, decision-making, problem-solving, fine motor development, and self-confidence simply and enjoyably.







Why Solitary Play Is So Valuable

These activities encourage:

- Independence and confidence in playing alone
- Focused attention and sustained engagement
- Decision-making and choice-making skills
- Curiosity and self-directed exploration
- Problem-solving through trial and error
- Fine motor development through hands-on play
- Self-regulation and calm independent play

How to Support Play at Home

Create a calm and engaging space where children explore independent play through hands-on discovery. They choose materials freely, explore at their own pace, and stay focused while playing alone, building confidence and curiosity.

Basic setup:

- A selection of safe, open-ended toys or materials (blocks, stacking cups, puzzles, sensory items)
- Small play tray, mat, or defined play area

Simple steps:

- Offer a variety of materials for the child to explore alone
- Let them manipulate, build, or explore in their own way
- Give quiet time for focused solo play without interruption

Helpful tips:

- Rotate materials to keep interest fresh
- Keep the space calm and distraction-free







Ideas

Provide simple toys like blocks, stacking cups, puzzles, or sensory baskets. Encourage children to play independently, explore freely, and enjoy their own choices while building confidence and focus in solo play.

SIMPLE PUZZLE PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Large, chunky puzzles (2–6 pieces)
- Wooden or board puzzles with knobs (optional)
- Flat play surface or mat
- Optional: shape or animal-themed puzzles

WHAT TO DO:

- Give the child a simple puzzle to explore.
- Show how to place one piece if needed.
- Encourage them to try fitting pieces independently.
- Let them repeat and solve at their own pace.

BENEFITS:

- Builds problem-solving and thinking skills
- Strengthens fine motor skills and hand control
- Develops concentration and patience
- Encourages independent (solitary) play
- Improves visual matching and recognition
- Boosts confidence through completion



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with very simple 2–3 piece puzzles.
- Use puzzles with matching pictures or shapes.
- Offer guided help only when needed.
- Repeat the same puzzle for confidence building.
- Gradually increase the number of pieces as skills grow.

BUSY BOX PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- A small box or basket
- Safe household objects (spoons, cups, fabric, balls, containers, toys)
- Optional: objects with different textures, sizes, or colours
- Flat play area or mat

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill a box with a variety of safe objects.
- Place it within the child's reach.
- Let them explore, pick up, and play independently.
- Allow them to move items in and out of the box freely.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages independent (solitary) play
- Builds curiosity and exploration skills
- Develops fine motor skills and hand control
- Supports sensory development
- Improves concentration and focus
- Encourages problem-solving and decision-making



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with a few familiar objects.
- Rotate items to keep interest fresh.
- Use themed boxes (kitchen items, nature items, toys).
- Keep objects safe and age-appropriate.
- Observe quietly without directing the play too much.

TRACK PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Toy cars or small vehicles
- Tape or drawn lines to make simple tracks
- Optional: cardboard ramps or boxes

WHAT TO DO:

- Create simple straight or curved tracks on the floor.
- Give the child toy cars to explore.
- Show how to move a car along the track once.
- Let them play independently, moving cars at their own pace.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages independent (solitary) play
- Builds fine and gross motor coordination
- Develops focus and concentration
- Supports understanding of direction and movement
- Encourages imagination and storytelling
- Improves hand-eye coordination



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with simple straight tracks.
- Use large cars that are easy to hold.
- Add ramps or bridges for variety.
- Introduce different track shapes over time.
- Allow free play without strict rules or outcomes.

OBJECTS AND DROP PLAY

WHATS NEEDED:

- Containers (cups, jars, tins, or boxes with openings)
- Safe drop items (large beads, blocks, pom-poms, balls, bottle caps)
- Optional: containers with different-sized openings

WHAT TO DO:

- Give the child a container and a selection of objects.
- Show how to drop one item into the container.
- Let them explore dropping objects independently.
- Encourage repetition and exploration of different items.

BENEFITS:

- Builds hand-eye coordination
- Encourages independent (solitary) play
- Develops fine motor skills and control
- Supports understanding of cause and effect
- Improves focus and concentration
- Encourages problem-solving and exploration



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with large containers and big objects.
- Use one type of object at first for simplicity.
- Gradually introduce smaller openings or different shapes.
- Offer containers at different heights or positions.
- Allow free exploration without strict rules.

BOOK BROWSING TIME

WHATS NEEDED:

- Picture books with bright, simple images
- A quiet, comfortable reading corner or mat
- Low shelf or basket for easy book access
- Soft cushion or seating area

WHAT TO DO:

- Place a selection of books within the child's reach.
- Allow them to choose a book independently.
- Let them look through pages at their own pace.
- Encourage them to point, turn pages, and explore pictures.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages independent (solitary) play
- Builds early love for books and reading
- Develops focus and concentration
- Supports visual recognition and observation
- Strengthens early language development
- Encourages curiosity and imagination



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with sturdy board books for easy handling.
- Use books with large, clear pictures.
- Limit book choices to avoid overwhelm.
- Rotate books regularly to maintain interest.
- Sit nearby for support without directing the play.

SENSORY BAG SQUISH

WHATS NEEDED:

- Seal-able zip-lock bags
- Hair gel, water, or safe sensory filler (foam, gel, or oil mix)
- Food colouring or glitter (optional)
- Strong tape (for extra sealing and safety)
- Flat play surface or mat

WHAT TO DO:

- Fill and securely seal the sensory bag.
- Tape edges to prevent spills.
- Place it on a flat surface.
- Let the child squish, press, and explore independently.
- Encourage them to watch how the contents move..

BENEFITS:

- Supports independent (solitary) play
- Develops sensory exploration and awareness
- Encourages calm and focused engagement
- Strengthens hand muscles and coordination
- Builds curiosity and cause-and-effect understanding
- Provides soothing and self-regulating play



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Start with simple water-filled bags.
- Add colours for visual interest.
- Keep textures soft and easy to press.
- Use thicker bags for durability.
- Offer different themed sensory bags (ocean, rainbow, nature).

TEXTURE RUBBING ART

WHATS NEEDED:

- Paper (thicker paper works best)
- Crayons or pencils
- Textured objects: leaves, coins, textured fabric, tree bark, sandpaper, or bottle caps
- Optional: coloured pencils, pastels, or markers for layering effects

WHAT TO DO:

- Place the paper over the textured object.
- Hold the paper steady and rub the side of a crayon or pencil over the surface to reveal the texture.
- Experiment with different angles, pressures, and colours to create varied effects.
- Encourage layering multiple textures on one piece of paper.
- Discuss what textures were easiest or hardest to see, and observe differences between objects.

BENEFITS:

- **Sensory Exploration:** Feel and discover different textures under the paper.
- **Observation Skills:** Encourages careful looking and noticing fine details in objects like leaves, coins, bark, or fabric.
- **Creativity & Expression:** Experiment with colour, layering, and patterns to create unique artwork.
- **Early Science Skills:** Introduces concepts of texture, pattern, and material properties in a hands-on way.
- Fine Motor Skills with rubbing



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different surfaces: leaves, coins, fabric, wood, or textured objects
- Experiment with crayons, pencils, or pastels for varied effects
- Try large sheets for collaborative projects or small pieces for individual work
- Explore patterns, layering, and color blending
- Encourage kids to create designs, shapes, or abstract art using textures

STACKING & BUILDING

WHATS NEEDED:

- Soft foam blocks of various shapes and sizes
- A flat, safe play surface (floor or low table)
- Optional: soft balls or beanbags for knocking down
- Timer or challenge cards (optional for added fun)

WHAT TO DO:

- Invite children to build towers, walls, or other structures with the foam blocks.
- Encourage experimentation with shapes, heights, and balance.
- Once the structures are built, children can gently knock them down using their hands or soft balls.
- Repeat the process, challenging children to build taller or more complex structures each time.

BENEFITS:

- Develops fine motor skills and hand strength
- Improves hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness
- Encourages creativity, planning, and problem-solving
- Teaches cause and effect through building and knocking down
- Supports turn-taking, patience, and cooperative play
- Builds confidence as children experiment and succeed



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **For younger children:** Use larger, easier-to-stack blocks and keep towers small.
- **For older children:** Introduce height challenges, balance games, or timed building tasks.
- **For cooperative play:** Encourage building together in teams.
- **For added sensory input:** Place blocks on different textured surfaces (carpet, foam mats, or trays).
- **For extra focus:** Add challenge cards with specific structures to build.

PEELING AND PLACING STICKERS

WHATS NEEDED:

- A variety of stickers (different sizes, textures, themes)
- Sticker sheets or rolls
- Paper, cardboard, or sticker books for placing
- Optional: tweezers or peel-assist tools for added challenge.

WHAT TO DO:

- Provide a variety of stickers and a surface (paper, notebook, tray).
- Show how to peel a sticker from the sheet gently.
- Encourage the child to choose and place stickers wherever they like.
- Let them press firmly to stick, using fingers or a tool for extra support.
- Join in and talk about sticker shapes, colors, or themes.

BENEFITS:

- Strengthens fine motor skills and pincer grasp
- Improves hand-eye coordination
- Builds focus and concentration
- Encourages creativity and self-expression
- Supports early literacy and math
- Boosts confidence and independence



HOW TO ADAPT:

- **Younger toddlers:** Use large, easy-to-peel stickers on a plain surface.
- **Older toddlers/preschoolers:** Introduce smaller stickers, patterns, or themed sheets.
- **Fine motor challenge:** Stickers on narrow lines, shapes, or small containers.
- **Creative twist:** Encourage making letters, numbers, or simple designs.
- **Sensory variation:** Stick on textured surfaces like felt or sandpaper.

POURING WATER

WHATS NEEDED:

- Various sized tubs
- Various washing tools
- Water

TIPS:

- Start with a small amount of water
- Demonstrate slowly once, then let the child try
- Keep towels nearby for quick clean-up

WHAT TO DO:

- Pour water into various sized containers.
- Add sponges and cloths for squeezing and soaking.
- Include watering cans for pretend garden play.
- Use wooden spoons for stirring and scooping.
- Encourage exploration of volume, flow, and texture.

BENEFITS:

- Encourages skill development across ages through water play.
- Builds fine motor skills with actions like pouring, stirring, and squeezing.
- Improves hand-eye coordination through scooping and squirting.
- Supports gross motor development during larger water movements.
- Promotes control and precision through repeated practice.



HOW TO ADAPT:

- Use different containers for varied grips and pouring styles.
- Add food colouring to the mix and explore colours.
- Include ice for temperature and texture changes.
- Add beads or sponges for scooping and floating fun.
- Pour soapy water for bubbly sensory play.
- Play indoors or outdoors to manage mess.
- Aim into bottles or marked levels for a challenge.
- Use small jugs for little hands to build control

SOLITARY PLAY ACTIVITIES

(+971) 0 564429917
www.TheChildUnplugged.com
Hannah@TheChildUnplugged.com
@TheChildUnplugged









Calm, creative, solitary, and independent exploration experiences for young children

Using familiar, accessible materials