

PLAY TYPES

Devised by Bob Hughes,
<http://rphughes44.blogspot.com/p/about.html>
 'A playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types'

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<https://capitadiscovery.co.uk/brighton-ac/items/1041913>



Image from:

<https://www.playscotland.org/playful-learning/play-types/>

Symbolic Play	play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth. For example: using a piece of wood to symbolise a creature; or a flower as a wand
Rough and Tumble Play	close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display. For example: play fighting, wrestling and chasing where the children involved are obviously unhurt and giving every indication that they are enjoying themselves.
Socio-dramatic Play	the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature. Children may 'step-out of character' to give new context or directions. For example: Playing at house, going to the shops, being mothers and fathers, organising a meal or even having a row.
Social Play	play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended. For example: any social or interactive situation which contains an expectation on all parties that they will abide by the rules or protocols i.e. games, conversations, making something together.
Creative Play	play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise. For example: enjoying creation with a range of materials and tools for its own sake.
Communication Play	play using words, nuances or gestures – uses the whole or part of the body. For example, mime, jokes, play acting, teases/fun-taking, singing, debate, poetry.
Dramatic Play	play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participator. For example: presentation of a TV show, a street event, a religious festival or event.
Deep Play	Absorbing play which allows the child to encounter risky, adventurous or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear. For example: leaping onto an aerial runway, riding a bike along a parapet, balancing on a beam. Concentration is required to 'try, try try'-ing again and extend 'skill'; the level of 'risk' will vary for each individual child and at different times
Exploratory Play	play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects. For example: engaging with an object or area and, either by manipulation or movement, assessing its properties, possibilities and content e.g. stacking bricks
Fantasy Play	play which re-arranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unrelated to reality, unlikely to occur and is not composed of real experiences, individuals or species. For example: being a dragon, super-hero or casting spells.
Imaginative Play	play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply. For example, patting an invisible dog; pretending to be a tree or ship.
Locomotor Play	movement in any or every direction for its own sake. For example: playing chase, jumping, skipping and climbing trees.

Mastery Play	Control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments around. For example changing the course of a stream, constructing a natural shelter, making and flying a kite
Object Play	play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movement to bring about new / wider understanding of the possibilities of everyday objects. For example: repetitive examination and use of a cloth or paintbrush
Role Play	play exploring ways of being of identity as a person (not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature) may involve amplification of particular traits e.g. accents, culture, gender. For example: pretending to be a driver of a fire truck, piloting a plane
Recapitulative Play	play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages. For example: dressing up in historic clothes, growing or cooking things.

Think about your most recent Forest School Session.

What sort of things were the children doing?

Were they playing or carrying out a given task?

If playing, what types of play were happening for the child? Be prepared to share one or two examples to illustrate one of the play types observed with the rest of the group.

Short observations of Play Types in action

These are spot observations taken from longer observation records made over six Forest School Sessions in early 2019.

Copy and cut out the following tables according to time available.

Short activity: (*cut the heading from the associated block of 6 observations*) allocate two headings per pair / group of 3 and ask them to find a block of 6 observations that most closely demonstrates their given play type(s). Be prepared to give reasons for choices made.

Longer activity: (*cut each of the weekly observations into strips and mix*) allocate two headings per pair / group of 3 and ask them to find 6 observations, each from different weeks, that most closely demonstrates their given play type(s). Be prepared to give reasons for the choices made.

Symbolic Play – play which allows control, gradual exploration and increased understanding without the risk of being out of one's depth.	
Week 1	'gold' and 'diamonds' and other 'treasure' dug out of mudhole (stones, tinsel, sticks, etc); fairy soup (straw and water);
Week 2	Tractor tyres became a space ship; bits of wood and other loose parts hit or tapped as controls;
Week 3	Creation of stick, straw and brick houses for the three little pigs; use of a small bicycle wheel as a source of electricity on top of the straw house; a piece of long wood for a table; another piece of wood with lines on for a radiator to keep warm;
Week 4	Sticks used to make stegosaurus footprints; a fallen branch became prison gate and bars;
Week 5	One child hammering on ground said she was making 'a trail of little footprints' she then hammered across a flat wooden board exclaimed 'look, now there are footprints on the board.'
Week 6	A board which had appeared, partially covering the mudhole, it became an improvised bridge;

Rough and Tumble Play – close encounter play which is less to do with fighting and more to do with touching, tickling, gauging relative strength. Discovering physical flexibility and the exhilaration of display.	
Week 1	Low level climbing and passing each other on parallel branches
Week 2	'bumpy rides' in tyre space ship ('drivers, leaning back for fast take-off then moving themselves backwards, forwards and sideways into each other as remained seated on the large tyre).
Week 3	'freeze' / 'unfreeze' interactions between two children and myself whilst laying trails and hiding behind trees;
Week 4	Running and falling as chased snowflakes;
Week 5	Zombie races – some accidental collisions and muddy slips;
Week 6	None directly observed

Socio-dramatic Play – the enactment of real and potential experiences of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.	
Week 1	Fairy queen organising the other fairies in keeping the fairy castle tidy
Week 2	Tyre 'space-ship' controller 'typing' on a block of wood that was the control panel and looking for maps on google.
Week 3	Re-creation of houses for the 3 little pigs; discussions of what required and where; (the boy who used the wheel to give electricity said he likes making things work like his dad); child pouring water in and out of containers by picnic tables was allocating the pulled pieces of fungi to different people as they were added to the soup 'mummy and daddy and baby – everyone has some soup in here'
Week 4	Straw, mud and ice 'Food' made to trick people into prison; prison guards keeping me in locked in 'prison' behind the fallen branch;
Week 5	One child with a long stick and some string-y fabric wrapped around. Flicking stick around the mud hole and making splashing, swooshing noises – asked 2 others who were watching him if they wanted to come fishing with him;
Week 6	Den building and discussion about what things needed in their new home

Social Play – play during which the rules and criteria for social engagement and interaction can be revealed, explored and amended. Children may 'step-out of character' to give new context or directions	
Week 1	Joint creation of a fairy soup around the fairy castle area – occasional pauses to re-frame e.g. no, those things aren't allowed in the soup
Week 2	A lot of sharing, support and interchanges on the tyre space ships and also amongst those around and in the mudhole; giving of helping hands to get people out or rescuing each other's wellies; penguin huddle around the teachers;
Week 3	Negotiations and exchanges in planning and creating houses for the three little pigs;
Week 4	Negotiations in the beats band on songs and rhythms; one child giving instructions to the others on saying come to my café to better trick people into eating 'jail food' and being taken prisoner;
Week 5	One child invited another to join him fishing – negotiated a share of the mudhole each;
Week 6	Lots of chat and discussions around the table whilst making medals – chatted about the best things in forest school – some agreements, some disagreed – lots of laughter.

Creative Play – play which allows a new response, the transformation of information, awareness of new connections, with an element of surprise.	
Week 1	Offered a 'journey/memory' stick to tie items on – children gathered all sorts of objects and came and told me their journey finding things around the wood area.
Week 2	Slight conflict in 'ownership' of a basket resolved by group working together to build a lovely nest inside it; Willow stems folded to shape head and body of a penguin on the ground, filled with leaves and branches to make a large natural picture (noted the stick chosen for the beak was actually covered in frosty spikes on one side).
Week 3	Little pig being taken to explore the houses made for them – each group were able to describe the features the pig could enjoy in their new house;
Week 4	Sharing of a 'soup' had some tricky 'prison' consequences to negotiate!
Week 5	Observed two children fishing in the mudhole; 'footprints' hammered out in mud and along wooden board near the mudhole;
Week 6	Adult led 'jewellery / necklace making, became child-led medal making;

Imaginative Play – play where the conventional rules, which govern the physical world, do not apply.	
Week 1	Pallet area became pirate ship with lookout; fairy castle with magical areas you mustn't step on
Week 2	Tractor tyres took off into space; turn taking in the cement mixer (mudhole); changing places within penguin huddles; being spies;
Week 3	Being spies
Week 4	Spies became prison guards – the fallen tree branch had a lot of invisible locks that the guards had to open and close in a set pattern to put their prisoners inside;
Week 5	One more child joining in at the fishing hole; another child seen bobbing up and down alongside netting to area where the chickens are kept – nodding his head up and down, occasionally bending forwards – heard making clucking noises;
Week 6	'stegosaurus' said I'm baking a dinosaur cake (picked up wooden discs and placed in a pan)

Locomotor Play – movement in any or every direction for its own sake.	
Week 1	Climbing on and off; climbing higher up trees; rocking forward and backward on lower branches
Week 2	'drivers' of tyre space-ship, leaning back or moving rapidly backwards, forwards and sideways; moving around available space in unusual ways as spies
Week 3	Spies creeping around the site, making themselves small or tall as moved around; turning and running playing 'freeze' / 'unfreeze' tig game
Week 4	Running around playing fields chasing each other and snowflakes
Week 5	Moving around site in pairs or groups with arms outstretched (Zombie races)
Week 6	Stomping backwards and forwards across the improvised mud-hole bridge; galloping chase

Communication Play – play using words, nuances or gestures, all or part of body. For example: mime, jokes, play acting, teases/fun-taking, singing, debate, poetry.	
Week 1	Needed to remember to knock on door with the right words to get into the fairy castle
Week 2	Made up names of places seen from the space-ship; pointing out items as they flew past them; discussions around mudhole 'get the treasures out before they set in the cement' ; making firey dragon breaths;
Week 3	Re-telling of the story of the three little pigs by a group of children; 3 or 4 children gathered on the pallet and playing beats on pans and wooden blocks (words said aloud and beats music played in rhythm of syllables (tree, pigeon, slippery, mud); later the same group were banging out and singing Jingle Bells loudly; one child changed the beat and the others copied it over and over laughing that they didn't know the words
Week 4	Exchange between the prison guards and a stegosaurus who said that their snow had gone 'lellow' – 'lellow? That's baby talk! Don't you know its yellow – y-y-y-y yellow' ' yeah, you got to say yyyyellow or you will have to go to prison'; 'lellow', 'no, yyy', 'I can say yyyyy' ' so say yellow', 'yyyylellow' 'you got to go to prison'
Week 5	One child noticed frowning and looking over a nearly squashed crocus – talking to himself and making commentaries on the plants – 'the plants are growing come on plant you can grow in the sunshine, grow plant, grow strong now'; 'motorbike' sound effects; 'fishing' sound effects;
Week 6	After T-Rex appeared, he and another child came up to me and started pretending to eat my arms. I slowly stood up with arms close in, leant forward and roared – so did the other two – we roared at each other several times – all laughed.

Dramatic Play – play which dramatizes events in which the child is not a direct participator	
Week 1	Digging for dinosaur bones; briefly, the platform was a boat lookout in case Zog came along
Week 2	Creation of a space ship in the tyres and ongoing alien searches were dramatizing the observed crashed 'alien space ship' seen in the infants playground on arrival at school that morning (set up by Junior class and teachers; spies keeping an eye on what was happening at the mudhole; penguin huddles and ways of keeping warm as a group
Week 3	I got pulled behind a tree by two children who told me the spies would get me – I needed to hide; they were spies creeping up on the other spies who were hiding further along the path; at the end of the session, one child revealed that the Grinch had been at the fairy castle and 'did you know there is a secret passage down there and you can go and steal presents from the tree?'
Week 4	Creation of 'Jail food' (straw, mud, sticks water); prison guards capturing other children / adults
Week 5	Riding 'motorbikes' around the tree tops;
Week 6	After reading 'It's NOT a stick', some children found sticks to ride and gallop on;

Deep Play – play which allows the child to encounter risky or even potentially life threatening experiences, to develop survival skills and conquer fear.	
Week 1	Climbing higher on the trees; standing in the squelchy mudhole;
Week 2	Sliding and getting stuck in mudhole – some entered the hole deliberately, others accidentally and some very cautiously; kept 8 or more children involved for a long part of the session
Week 3	Tree climbing to get through past the Grinch's secret passage;
Week 4	Being outside whilst it was snowing – watching snowflakes spiralling down and making you dizzy;
Week 5	More children tree climbing; one child up higher, riding his 'motorbike' on the bouncy 'fast' branches; child who had been wary of getting muddy, created own small hollow alongside the big mudhole – seen poking the mud in the big hole (later said she was looking for water to put in her hole); joined by another child equally wary of getting muddy who cautiously stepped into the mud hole, slipped a bit – helped out by more confident mudholers; two children had got a little muddy but no fuss this week;
Week 6	some children took it in turns to dare each other to stomp across the improvised bridge; others called 'look out for the monsters under the bridge – they'll get you!' Lots of giggles and laughter in the sudden 'boos! Got you!!'

Exploratory Play – play to access factual information consisting of manipulative behaviours such as handling, throwing, banging or mouthing objects.	
Week 1	Lots of excitement looking at all areas in the Forest School not seen since early autumn – loose parts touched, moved, collected for developing play during the session;
Week 2	Creation of control panel from carefully selected loose parts (items needed were gear stick and buttons and a computer); Last week's gold -diggers discovered mix too heavy (now frozen) – so sludge became cement and stirred with long sticks and spread over nearby bricks to build a small wall
Week 3	Use of straw and sticks to build a house (those with bricks had less material exploration to consider); use of sticks to make marks or to use as arrows and 'X's by the 'spies' to lay trails to be followed; those playing with the water in containers on the tables noticed floating and sinking things and began experimenting with other items found including bits of fungi off the wooden tables; a variety of sticks, pans and wooden blocks used for playing beats;
Week 4	Flicking around of plaster after making a cast and saying it was heavy snow falling; when mixing the water and plaster, one child said it had all frothed up like raspberry water – he then asked others what flavour snow they had? It's yellow, so it's lemon snow!
Week 5	One child playing with a worm, over and over in her hands. Occasionally dropping it and then picking it up again and spinning it around a bit – watching it sometimes, but not always. Groups and individuals searching for small soft or hard objects to show and coloured items to match treasure pots; One group on pallet platform making a band – lots of pots and sticks and rhythmic banging and shouting and laughter;
Week 6	Two girls working together to develop the den / shelter around the stick lean to

Fantasy Play – play which re-arranges the world in the child's way, a way which is unlikely to occur.	
Week 1	'Invisible' doors to be knocked on to enter the magical fairy castle; baby dinosaur became a small friendly dog; several 'fire-breathing dragons' running around after the story
Week 2	Two children stomping along the path as flying aliens looking for a lost friend; tyre space ships 'flying around'; penguin huddles;
Week 3	One of the 'spies' found some fabric and draped it on shoulders, became Elsa as sang 'let it go' as she followed the trails; whilst I was helping to lay a trail 'Elsa' zipped past and pointed her stick and arm at me shouting 'freeze', I did until another of the 'spies' said 'unfreeze' – this exchange between the two and myself continued for several minutes;
Week 4	Children as prison guards taking grown ups prisoner; 'stegosaurus' seen sitting on stumps in the kitchen area (later told me that the humps were his toilet and he had to sit down to rest there); 'stegosaurus' stomping around leaving stick foot prints in the snow then started marching stiffly shouting 'activate' 'activate' 'I am a robot' 'activate'; ;
Week 5	one child up higher in the tree, riding his 'motorbike' bouncing on the branches – roaring and revving his engines loudly; Zombie races;
Week 6	After the reading of 'It's NOT a stick' book, one child waved 3 sticks over his head and said 'watch out, I'm going to zap you!' ZZZZAPPP!! Another child's stick was a 'sword to go and hunt dinosaurs' Monsters under the bridge – they'll get you! Lots of giggles and laughter in the sudden 'boos! Got you!!' Excuse me – I'm Mr Dinosaur! I don't want a medal, I am a T-Rex and I like cake!

Locomotor Play – movement in any or every direction for its own sake.	
Week 1	Higher tree climbing by some; running along tracks; transportation of water in pans, wheelbarrow and other containers to the mudhole (Mine)
Week 2	Tracks became alien paths in space; sliding around mudhole, in and out for some (and getting stuck!); spies moving slowly along the path, hiding behind trees as approached the mudhole; moving around the penguin huddles; hiding under a parachute and creating a warmer place;
Week 3	'brick group' working out how to get bricks to their given building area – found some large plastic boxes and containers to help push or drag or carry in pairs; Tracking different groups of spies; filling and emptying containers of water and ice around by the picnic tables; two boys working together to transport a long piece of corrugated tubing from one part of the wood to another, pushing it, sliding it and eventually working out how to carry it together;
Week 4	Chasing falling snow; catching up small handfuls to throw at each other's legs; stegosaurus stomping along the paths; robot marching along the path;
Week 5	Children searching for small soft or hard objects to show; searching for coloured items to fill treasure pots; Child spinning a worm by its tail, watching others around her and not always looking at the worm until it was dropped, she'd pick it up and spin again; child seen jogging along the back path, up and down several times – smiled and said 'I like jogging' it keeps you healthy'; 3 children running fast but in an unusual gait 'look out the zombies are coming'
Week 6	Stick riding galloping horses; stomp stomp over the new mudhole bridge

Mastery Play – control of the physical and affective ingredients of the environments.	
Week 1	Digging; staying balanced on the mud slides around the mudhole
Week 2	Slow slides into mudhole; cautious and really scared slides observed – some children repeated the experiences others left the area after a little slip; controlling the fast flying space-craft;
Week 3	Creating sturdy straw and stick houses with doors and windows; creating spaces in bricks for windows; problem solving the various group construction requirements;
Week 4	Manipulating the fallen snow; mixing and frothing plaster and water;
Week 5	'fishing child' focussed on getting fabric line just so in the mudhole after flicking it up and around; digging 'fishing' hole to make it really big;
Week 6	A little digging of covered hole to get deeper under the cover; higher tree climbing

Object Play – play which uses infinite and interesting sequences of hand-eye manipulations and movements.	
Week 1	Part completed 'journey stick' became a dragon with oak leaves as wings and extra sticks as legs
Week 2	Simple and increasingly complex tapping and wriggling of objects given status as 'space ship controls' when getting ready for take-off and to keep it moving around space.
Week 3	Use of loose parts to create added features within the three little houses; experimentation with floating and sinking objects as ingredients in the 'family soup' being created near the picnic tables;
Week 4	Re-arranging sticks and leaves into patterns ready for the plaster casts;
Week 5	Child spinning worm and moving it repeatedly from one hand to the other; child 'fishing' flicking 'rod' so 'line' gets into the fishing hole;
Week 6	Complex twisting of the 'three magic sticks' after telling others they were going to get ZZAPPED!

Role Play – play exploring ways of being, although not normally of an intense personal, social, domestic or interpersonal nature.	
Week 1	'captain' holding stick to eye and moving head to look around area from the pirates' lookout
Week 2	Pairs of spies – hiding and seeking other spies and escaping from the badduns; being penguins in a huddle
Week 3	Construction workers; child by picnic tables was allocating pulled pieces of fungi to different people as cooking 'mummy and daddy and baby – everyone has some soup in here'
Week 4	To and fro shifts in one child from being a human to a stegosaurus and a robot at different times during the session;
Week 5	Time sat 'fishing' quietly with a friend (long sticks in hand and held at angle over the mud hole)
Week 6	Turn taking being across the mudhole bridge or a scary monster shouting at the individual who was crossing the bridge

Recapitulative Play – play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.	
Week 1	Digging in the mud for old buried gold
Week 2	Slow and controlled sliding into the mudhole; group mixing of cement for building purposes; closing eyes to see who could be warmest in the penguin huddle;
Week 3	Drum beats and rhymes; using magic to control (freeze / unfreeze);
Week 4	Making dens to shelter from the snow;
Week 5	One child who has been very wary of the big mudhole was seen helping another child dig a smaller hollow nearby - emptied water out of own container to pour into the hollow, then carefully jumped once or twice in this new puddle they had made – called others to come and celebrate the new muddy pool;
Week 6	One child digging alongside the long edge of the board covering the mudhole said he was trying to dig out even more treasures