Recipes to Play

A Community PLAYbook for Fun and Learning
About the Playbook

The purpose for this book is to encourage parents and caregivers to have playful and affectionate interactions with infants and toddlers. Infants learn from their connections with the people around them. If a baby is surrounded by people she feels safe with, she will feel more confident to explore and engage with the world and the other people in it. Play is the powerful way in which children learn to think, wonder and discover. By following some of the simple recipes in this book, you are aiding infants and toddlers in their development.

This book has been designed for and by this community. We thank the families and child care providers who submitted recipes to play. We received many submissions and hope to print more in the future!

Our intentions for the book are for parents and other individuals and agencies involved in the care of infants and toddlers to use any or all of the materials and activities for fun and creative interactions with our young children.

This book was created by professionals from four New York counties—Delaware, Otsego, Chenango and Schoharie—who together make up the DOCS Infant and Toddler Leadership Circle.

In seeking to raise awareness of the significance of these early years, the group initiated its First Annual Infant and Toddler Day on April 13, 2013. Please see the inside back cover for more details about our group and how you can contact us.

About DOCS Infant and Toddler Leadership Circle

We are a group of professionals dedicated to improving the well-being of infants and toddlers in the four New York counties that make up the DOCS group: Delaware, Otsego, Chenango and Schoharie. We work in many different programs and systems that serve young children and families, including Head Start and Early Head Start, Home Visiting, Public Health, University, Child Care, Early Intervention, Child Care Resource and Referral, Family Support, and other settings.

Formed in 2011 and allied with the New York Zero-to-Three Network, the group has been working diligently to be a voice for babies and young children in a multidisciplinary child development initiative to promote the value and importance of the first three years of life.

For questions or suggestions regarding this playbook or the DOCS Infant and Toddler Leadership Circle, please call Sarah Gould-Houde, Regional Infant Toddler Specialist, Capital District Child Care Council, (518) 426-7181, Ext. 345, or email: sgould@cdcccc.org.

For information on the New York Zero-to-Three Network, see www.nyztt.org. To form or reach other Infancy Leadership Circles around New York State, please contact: infancycirclenys@nyztt.org.
Picker-Uppers

**Appropriate Ages:** 2 years and up

**Appropriate Place:** Inside

**Ingredients:** large smoothie straws, masking or duct tape, ice cube tray, small plastic animals or miniature cookie cutters or large jar caps or other small items to pick up**

**make sure items are not a choking hazard, test with choking tube**

**Steps:**

1. Make a picker-upper by taking a large smoothie straw and bending it in half. Secure the bend in the straw by taping around it. This will keep the straw in a bent position, like large tweezers.

2. Adults set up picker-uppers and empty ice cube tray. Have the child pick up the small items with the picker-upper and place in ice cube tray, or move around as he feels fit.

**Submitted by:** Theresa

**Enjoyed by:** Elizabeth, age 2 years

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About the DOCS Infant and Toddler Leadership Circle
Social and Emotional Development

The thoughts, feelings and expectations children develop about themselves and others in their world.

“80% of skills for success in life are determined by Emotional Intelligence”

Movement is Learning

Appropriate Ages: Non-mobile infants and up
Appropriate Place: Any
Ingredients: safe and clean space
Steps:
1. Clear a clean spot on the floor. Put down a clean blanket or towel if desired.
2. Place infant on her back and allow her to freely move in the space. Stay there with her to make sure she feels safe.
3. Add one or two toys about one foot from the infant for her to look at or reach for.

Submitted by: Caroline
Enjoyed by: Wendy, 8 months

“A moving infant is a learning infant!”
Super Awesome Bubbles

Appropriate Ages: Any, but supervise younger infants closely
Appropriate Place: Fairly empty space inside or outside
Ingredients: 6 cups water
1 cup corn syrup
2 cups regular dish soap
Steps:
1. Mix all the above ingredients to make the bubble solution. These bubbles are said to be more durable and last longer than bubbles from a regular solution.
2. Go to a safe and open space and blow the bubbles for children to explore. Let mobile children try to blow the bubbles. Encourage children to move by having them try to pop or catch the bubbles.
3. Add a bit of food coloring and take them outside and have them land on white paper! Careful to not stain clothes.

Submitted by: Amanda Fitch

All About Me Book

Appropriate Ages: Floor babies, moving babies, and toddlers
Appropriate Place: Inside
Ingredients: paper
home-made book
pictures
Markers/crayons
Steps:
1. You and the children can draw in the book.
2. Take pictures of the child, family, pets, friends, places, trips or any of the child’s other interests such as fruits and vegetables or animals. Glue the pictures into the book.
3. Find a cozy place to look at the pictures and drawings and talk about them.

Submitted by: Cindy
Enjoyed by: Mahalia and Sianna, age 18 months
**Time With Me**

**Appropriate Ages:** All

**Appropriate Place:** All places

**Ingredients:** None

**Steps:**

Slow down and enjoy simple moments with a child. Respond quickly and warmly to the child’s needs. Have fun while talking, rocking in a chair, or playing together. Allow the child to just be and at times allow her to lead and then respond.

**Submitted by:** Cassie

**Enjoyed by:** Hayley, age 6 months

“Positive relationships bring safety, comfort and pleasure to the child’s world and set the stage for relationships with others throughout life.”

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**Homemade Finger Paint**

**Appropriate Ages:** When a baby can sit up on own and older

**Ingredients:**

½ cup of salt, 1 cup of water, 2 tablespoons cornstarch, food coloring

**Steps:**

1. Mix ingredients into a pan and stir constantly on stovetop until mixture boils and then thickens.

2. Add the amount of food coloring need for desired effects. Take off the stove to cool; carefully pouring paint into its designated container before cooling will help with the clean up.

3. Once paint is cool, give the child a piece of paper; find a spot on the table or sidewalk to paint, using his fingers. If the child does not like touching the paint, offer a paint brush. Create away!!!

**Submitted by:** Denise

**Enjoyed by:** Jordan, age 3 years
Nature Walk

**Appropriate Ages:** Walking babies and older

**Appropriate Place:** Outside

**Ingredients:** None

**Steps:**

1. Dress child appropriately for the weather conditions and go outside to explore the sights and sounds outdoors.

2. Ask questions that have no answers about what is surrounding the child. Such as, “What do you think that bird is doing in the tree?” or “What does that flower smell like?”

3. Encourage the child to feel, smell, and listen to different objects on the walk. Encourage the child to look up, down, and all around.

**Submitted by:** Heather

**Enjoyed by:** Many

“Providing children with many opportunities for movement throughout the day is healthy and a free and easy learning time.”

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Peek-A-Boo!

**Appropriate Ages:** Infants and Toddlers

**Appropriate Places:** All places

**Ingredients:** blanket

**Steps:**

1. Make eye contact with the baby. Pick up a blanket and cover your face. After one or two seconds move the blanket so the baby can see you again. Smile and say “Peek-A-Boo!”

2. Try playing around a wall or a corner, making yourself disappear and reappear.

3. For children who are 10 months and older, place a blanket over a toy, and ask, “Where did it go?” See if the baby tries to find it. Give him hints if needed.

**Submitted by:** Sarah

**Enjoyed by:** Adelaide, age 1 year
Breathe: Tune in and Focus

Appropriate Ages: 2 years old and up

Appropriate Places: All

Ingredients: none

Steps:

1. To help children feel calm, aware of and in control of their bodies, try deep breathing. Toddlers will follow an adult in mimicking the motions.

2. Elephant Breath: Stand with your feet wide apart. Link your hands and dangle your arms in front of you like an elephant trunk. Inhale through your nose as you raise your arms high above your head and lean back. Exhale through your mouth as you swing your arms down through your legs. Repeat.

3. Bumble Bee Breath: Breathe in fully through your nose, and breathe out through your mouth, buzzing.

Submitted by: Jack

Enjoyed by: Mia, age 2 years


Physical Development—Gross and Fine Motor

Gross motor development is achieved by babies using their arms, body, and legs.

Fine motor development is achieved by babies using their hands and fingers.

“Babies will one day use their fine motor skills for cutting, writing, cooking and much more!”
Oobleek

**Appropriate Ages:** 1 year and up

**Appropriate Place:** Any space it is okay to get messy

**Ingredients:** cornstarch, water, food coloring, bowl

**Steps:**

1. In a bowl combine equal parts of water and cornstarch (three tablespoons each is enough for a small amount for one child to play with) and a small amount of food coloring if desired. The Oobleek should be a consistency that is between a liquid and a solid.

2. Invite children to touch the substance and play with it. Talk about it’s different properties, smooth, silky, wet, dry, liquid, solid, etc.

**Submitted by:** Kim

**Enjoyed by:** Many Early Head Start children and their families

“*When a child is using her sensory abilities she is stimulating her brain and connecting brain cells!*”

Faces

**Appropriate Ages:** 6 months old and up

**Appropriate Places:** All

**Ingredients:** pictures of peoples’ faces, paper, glue

**Steps:**

1. Using a magazine or newspaper, cut out pictures of people with a sampling of facial expressions. For example, someone who is smiling, crying, frowning or looking excited. Paste the pictures on a sheet of paper, making a collage.

2. Talk with the child about the facial expressions the people are making and why they are making them. Maybe also talk about when you have the same expression and why. “I cry when I feel sad.”

3. Using a shatter-proof mirror, make different facial expressions with the child and talk about how your faces look. Helping children label their feelings will help them express them.

**Submitted by:** Arlene and Al

**Enjoyed by:** Tamara, age 2 years, and Ian, age 1 year
Language and Literacy Development

The ability to understand and use words.

Babies need to hear the sounds of language in order to be able to use them!

"We do not teach children how to speak. They simply play with the words we give them."

Reading to babies is one of the most important ways to promote school readiness.

Ocean in a Bottle or Snow Globe

Appropriate Ages: 2 years and up

Appropriate Place: Inside, kitchen

Ingredients: 1- or 2-liter plastic bottle with cap, clear oil (baby, mineral or light cooking), water, food coloring, funnel, tacky craft glue, hot glue gun, glitter, small toys that can fit through the bottle top

Steps:

1. Fill the plastic bottle 1/3 to 1/2 full of water.

2. Add drops of food coloring to the water until you reach a desired color. Blue and green together make the color of the sea, but your child might want to make a red, orange or even hot pink “ocean.” Use this time to talk about colors and what happens when different colors are mixed.

3. Add colorful items to the bottle of colored water: glitter, marbles, buttons, plastic figures, etc.

4. Using a funnel, fill the remainder of the bottle with oil, leaving 2 inches at the top.

5. Apply hot glue around the base of the cap to make sure it is sealed.

6. Turn the bottle over and watch what happens!

Submitted by: Keesha   Enjoyed by: 2.5-4-year-olds
Hot and Cold

Appropriate Ages: 1 year and up

Appropriate Place: Inside

Ingredients: teethers—one red and one blue—OR small Tupperware containers with tight fitting lids; bowl of refrigerated ice water or snow; bowl of hot water (not too hot to touch)
If using Tupperware: food coloring (red/blue)

Steps:

If using teethers: Chill blue teether in ice water or refrigerator. Warm red teether in hot water. Give each teether to child, talking about the different sensations of cold and hot in turn. Allow child to explore different temperatures.

If using Tupperware containers: Fill one container with ice water and add blue food coloring. Fill the other container with hot water and add red food coloring. Make sure lids are on securely. Give each container to the child so that they can hold, shake, explore the different temperatures. Talk about hot and cold.

Submitted by: Heather

Enjoyed by: Ethan and Alton

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Read with Me

Appropriate Ages: All

Appropriate Places: All

Ingredients: children’s book

Steps:

1. Find a comfy chair or spot on the floor and sit and read a book. Start reading to babies at birth. Cloth and cardboard books with simple large pictures and dark lines are best for newborns.

2. Leave a few books where children can crawl or walk to them to look at as they choose. Even a nine-month-old baby may crawl over to a book and look at it on her own.

3. When reading, follow the child’s cues. If the child is squirming or does not want to read the book, do not force her. Reading should be delightful and interesting. We want children to want to read.

4. Remember that the repetition of reading the same story over and over is reassuring to children and helps them learn the art of storytelling.

Submitted by: Ben

Enjoyed by: Jakob, age 1 year
Talk To Me

**Appropriate Ages:** All

**Appropriate Place:** All

**Ingredients:** none

**Steps:**

1. Talk to infants, toddlers and all children. Children learn language first by hearing it.

2. Use descriptions. Simply describe the baby’s surroundings. This will help her attach words to people and objects. For example, “That black dog is big and fluffy!”

3. Expand words children are using. This process is like “decorating” the words of a child, rather than “correcting.” If a child says, “Car go!” an adult can enhance it by saying, “Yes, I see that car going too!”

4. When speaking with young children, remember to speak slowly and clearly and have solid eye contact. Try to keep background noises to a minimum so infants can hear the sounds of language.

**Submitted by:** Alyssa

**Enjoyed by:** Zeb, age 1 month

5. **Playing with the tracking tube:**

—*For infants:* Hold the tube close to the child. Pick an object that will fit through the tube, like a ball or block. Show the child the block and then drop it through the tube and let it fall to the floor. This will engage the infant’s eyes to watch where the object went. This will help her eyes develop and spark her curiosity.

—*For children ages 1 year and up:* Have child play with the tubes. They can find things to drop or roll through the tubes. This type of open-ended play can help toddlers learn about cause and effect! It is just like a science experiment.
Tracking Tubes

**Appropriate Ages:** Infants with adults, 1 year and up

**Ingredients:** empty clear plastic bottles, scissors, duct or masking tape

**Steps:**
1. Make the container. Clear plastic empty containers, one liter bottles and tennis ball containers work the best, but any empty drink bottle will do.
2. Clean the container and take the label off.
3. Cut the top and bottom off of the container.
4. Cover the cut area with tape, so it is not sharp. A set of four or five can be a lot of fun!

“Play is the highest form of research!”
—Albert Einstein

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Playtime Words

**Appropriate Ages:** 2 years old and up

**Appropriate Place:** Living room

**Ingredients:** masking tape, cardboard, empty oatmeal and cereal boxes

**Steps:**
1. Take collected materials and make a pretend airport, street, house, school, or neighborhood. Masking tape can make great roads or runways. Empty cereal boxes make good tunnels for cars to drive through.
2. Let the child take the lead in making the play world. While playing, use new words, for example, “Look at your car zoom through that dark tunnel.”
3. While playing, ask the child to come up with names for things. For example, “We just put a street there. What should we name it? Factory Street? Okay, I’ll write that down there.”

**Submitted by:** Andrea

**Enjoyed by:** Olivia, age 2 years
Home-Made Book

Appropriate Ages: All
Appropriate Places: All
Ingredients: clear sandwich zip-lock bags, paper, crayons/markers, masking or duct tape, stapler, scissors

Steps:
1. Cut paper to fit the size of the zip-lock bags. Draw pictures on one side of the paper or cut pictures from a magazine or newspaper and paste on.
2. Write words to describe the picture or make a little story book. Do this for at least four bags.
3. Once done with the bags, staple the bags together just above the zip-lock seam. Tape over the staples so they are not sharp.
4. Find a cozy spot to sit down and read your new book!

Submitted by: Michelle
Enjoyed by: Jason, age 1 year

Sensory Bags

Appropriate Ages: 6 months and up, with direct supervision
Ingredients: large zip-lock bag, packing or duct tape, food coloring, any type of clear hair gel, and any of these items: feathers, paper strips, confetti, glitter

Steps:
1. Make the bag for the child. Fill the zip-lock bag about 2/3 full with hair gel. Drop food coloring of choice in the bag to get desired color. Put materials such as feathers in the gel. Seal the bag tightly. Place in another empty zip-lock bag and seal again. Tape over the seal of the bag to secure the contents. Make sure the bag is sealed tight.
2. Give the bag to the child and see what he does with it. This toy should not be used for mouthing.
3. Children and adults of all ages enjoy the puffy, squishy feeling. You can talk to the child about the colors, the floating objects, and how the bag feels.

Submitted by: Barbara, Heather, and April
Enjoyed by: Liam, Oliver, Kayden, Alyssa, Ayah, Mason and many other children

“When infants and toddlers get to use any of their five senses, the brain is fully engaged in learning and developing!”
The Tiny Seed

Appropriate Ages: Toddlers and up

Ingredients: disposable see-through cups, potting soil, green bean seeds. The book, The Tiny Seed by Eric Carle, is not necessary but will add to the experience. **

Steps:

1. Read The Tiny Seed. Ask questions about how seeds grow and what they need to grow. Discuss healthy eating habits related to growing your own vegetables.
2. Help child place potting soil in a cup and plant bean seeds. Take a picture of the plant and child.
3. Talk about taking care of the plant by watering it and making sure it gets enough sun.
4. Visit the plant every day; discuss how it looks and what is happening. You can take a picture of the plant and child once a week. Make a collage or book of the pictures.
5. When plants are big enough, plant outside.
6. When beans are ready, pick and eat the beans!

**Remember to be careful with the seeds and plant leaves as they can be dangerous if ingested.

Submitted by: Melissa

Enjoyed by: Manny, age 3 years

Picture Narrating

Appropriate Ages: All

Appropriate Places: Inside

Ingredients: crayons, paper

Steps:

1. Let the child draw a picture.
2. When the child is done, ask him to tell you about what he drew.
3. Ask if it is okay to write down on the picture or the back of it what the child just told you about the picture. Write down the words as he said them. Then point to the words as you read them back to the child. Tell him those were the words he just said about his drawing. Try this with the majority of any young child’s drawings.

Submitted by: Ann

Enjoyed by: Andy, age 2 yrs; Samantha, age 3 yrs

“The basis of reading is:
What you think can be said.
What you say can be written.
What is written can be read.”
Cognitive, Math and Science Development

The ability of the brain to learn and think.

Fact: Brain growth and development is most rapid in the first three years of life!

Fact: Fun and age appropriate early experiences help the brain become ready to learn throughout a child’s entire life.

Drop Box

Appropriate Ages: One year old and up

Appropriate Places: Inside

Ingredients: empty shoebox, scissors, duct or masking tape

Steps:

1. Make the toy. Securely tape the lid to the shoebox. Cut a hole about 4 inches wide in the top corner side of the box, and tape around the edges so it is not sharp. Do the same on the other side of the box in the bottom corner.

2. Have the child play with the box! Give the child the box with any toy or object that fits in it, such as a clean sock, stuffed animal, toy car or wash cloth. Something that can be pulled out of the box is a lot of fun.

3. Do not tell the child that there is something in the box or how to get it out. Let the child figure it out. Give hints as needed.

4. Allow the child to find other items to drop in and take out of the box.

Submitted by: Eric  Enjoyed by: Michael, age 1

“When a baby does this type of activity, she uses the same type of problem-solving skills she will use to do math problems one day.”