

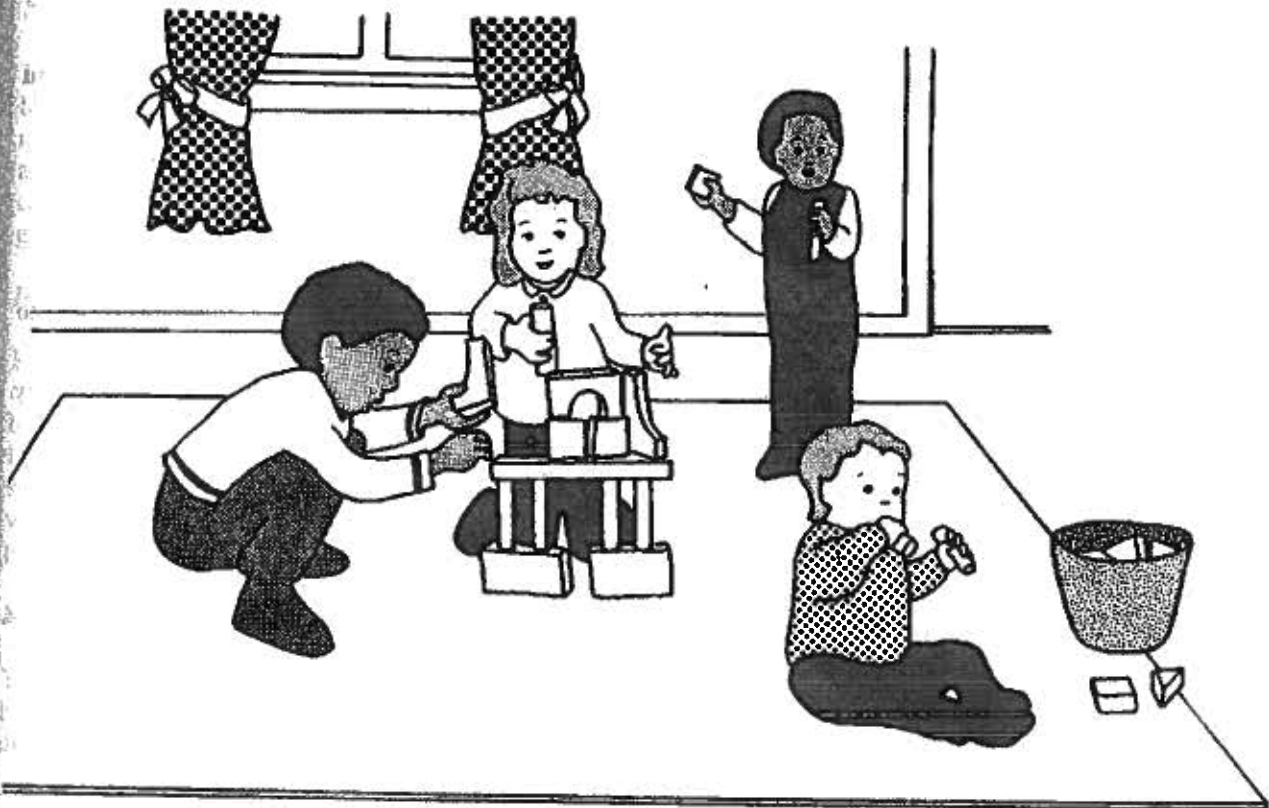


---

## I. Why Blocks Are Important

---

Blocks encourage children to explore, to try out their own ideas, and to recreate the world around them. Whether made of hardwood, cardboard, or soft spongy material, blocks encourage children to build, to make patterns, and even to destroy what they have made and start all over again. From the simple explorations of an infant or toddler to the more complex buildings of a preschool or school-age child, blocks offer children unending learning opportunities.



When children play with blocks, they develop their physical skills. Lifting blocks, moving them around, and making structures help children develop balance and coordination as well as large and small muscle skills. Children also develop math concepts as they build when they notice that two small blocks can take the place of one long block. They solve problems methodically as they try to figure out how to make a bridge or a ramp. They create designs and patterns using blocks as an art material. Children develop social skills, too, as they listen to each others ideas and learn to share materials.



Here are some examples of how block play supports development.

***Children develop thinking skills by:***

- discovering the physical characteristics of materials (mouthing and squeezing rubber block).
- learning how their actions affect objects (piling blocks to make a tall tower and knocking it down).
- learning to represent other places and things (building an enclosure of blocks, filling with animals, and calling it "a zoo").
- solving construction problems (constructing a house of blocks with windows and steps).

***Children develop socially by:***

- understanding appropriate behavior (building a tower and knocking it down but not destroying another child's tower).
- making friends and developing social skills (working together to create a building).
- learning how to cooperate (sharing blocks).

***Children develop emotionally by:***

- building self-esteem and pride (showing what they have made to the provider or to their parents).
- replaying scary events so they can control their feelings (creating a setting to play hospital or monsters).
- developing independence (putting blocks away in the correct place when they are finished).

***Children develop physically by:***

- learning how to coordinate eye and hand actions (stacking cardboard blocks one at a time to make a tower).
- developing large muscles (carrying blocks around the room).
- developing small muscle control and learning to balance (carefully placing unit blocks so that a tall building won't fall down).

These are just a few of the many ways in which young children develop and grow through block play. You can encourage this learning and growth by setting the stage for block play in your home.