



PLAY IS FOREVER

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PLAY

**generations
united**
Because we're stronger together


Toy Industry Association, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

Excitement and laughter fill the room as the children and older adults play hide and seek—even though some of the adults can't physically run or hide. What's going on? The players have spontaneously re-invented this classic play pattern: The "grandparent" counts to ten while the children hide, and then verbalizes all the places they are "searching" for the children until finally the children pop out of their hiding places, squealing with delight.

Play is the great equalizer as this real-life example demonstrates. Every child instinctively knows how to play, and adults of all ages can still play too, especially since the benefits of intergenerational play are exponential. The purpose of this brochure is to increase understanding about the benefits of play for people of all ages and illustrate how play and toys can successfully be used to enhance intergenerational relationships.

BENEFITS OF PLAY

Play enables individuals to learn about themselves and the world, stimulates mind and body, builds bonds, fosters greater imagination and supports all stages of development. What comes to mind when you hear the word play? Certainly children, as "play is children's work." However, play benefits all ages, from children to older adults, and is essential to well-being.

Extensive reviews of research demonstrate that play promotes cognitive development, language, motor abilities and social maturity.¹ Additionally, play allows children to express and explore feelings, thoughts and experiences.² Even businesses can experience remarkable breakthroughs from play, which helps establish a safe environment for introducing new ideas, generating dialogue, challenging assumptions, and building a sense of common purpose.³

"If we can learn to play consciously, lovingly, openly, our games can lead us to moments of profound spiritual union and rebirth. Our children become our mentors, revising our vision, increasing our compassion and our capacity for joy."

Bernie DeKovan, Intergenerational Play Project



As the chart below demonstrates, there are many similarities in the benefits of intergenerational play for children and adults.

	YOUNG CHILDREN	OLDER ADULTS
COGNITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase flexibility in thinking (imagination; symbolic representation) • Make new connections of meaning • Gain concrete experience with visual/spatial, & mathematical relationships • Solve problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise flexibility in thinking (imagination, creativity) • Make new connections of meaning (critical thinking) • Recognize surprises; alter ideas & habits (expectations are challenged) • Solve problems
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express ideas and negotiate with peers (language development) • Learn what is acceptable language and behavior in the culture • Learn to share, compromise, respond to others • Make friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express ideas and articulate convincing arguments • Share perspectives based on life experiences • Learn to adapt and change • Make new friends and keep the old
PHYSICAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice and consolidate small and gross motor skills • Oxygenate & stimulate blood flow to the brain • Gain concrete experience with relationships of weight, size, distance, etc. • Increase control over tools and materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise small and large muscles • Oxygenate & stimulate blood flow to the brain • Maintain a measure of control over the physical world
EMOTIONAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact with others and learn to express feelings appropriately • Work through emotionally charged experiences • Experiment with new roles for self • Learn to show empathy • Build self esteem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact with others and express feelings (combat depression) • Review life (integrity vs. despair) • Imagine new roles for self (growth) • Express empathy (give love or perish) • Build self esteem¹²



WHY INTERGENERATIONAL PLAY?

Children and adults who play together discover a world beyond themselves,⁴ engendering respect for each individual's knowledge, strengths and values.⁵ Both learning and enjoyment soar as they play.

Research shows that children who play with adults demonstrate greater creativity and higher levels of language and problem solving skills than when playing solely with other children.⁶ Additionally, infant and toddler play is more sophisticated with adult partners.⁷ Engaging with adults supports optimal cognitive and social-emotional development.⁸

For older adults, play has psychological and health benefits, reducing stress, promoting relaxation, and giving perspective to the demands of life.⁹ Building and maintaining relationships via play is associated with better mental health, less disease and disability, and increased survival.¹⁰ During play, intergenerational shared site facilities observe positive changes in mood and higher engagement even among frail elders.¹¹

SUGGESTED GUIDELINES

1. SELECTING TOYS

Certain toys are more conducive to positive intergenerational play, but all toys can be adapted to maximize the play experience between generations. Choose toys suitable to all participant's ages, abilities and skill levels. The age grading on the package should guide your selection of safe and appropriate toys. For example, if the package indicates the toy is not for children under 3, it may have small parts or require manual dexterity to handle. The age grading is not relative to the intelligence of the child but rather their developmental stage and what they are likely to enjoy at a specific age.

2. INTERGENERATIONAL TOYS

Toys that will increase intergenerational interactions tend to:

- Have a range of use depending on ability levels.
- Enable everyone to engage in play.
- Include easy to follow directions.
- Be open ended to encourage play that is shaped by the players.
- Encourage creativity, imagination, reading, writing, drawing, communication or problem-solving.

3. SUGGESTIONS FOR SPONTANEOUS PLAY AND PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Toys are a wonderful vehicle for connecting generations, when play just happens or when the play interaction is pre-planned and structured.

"You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation."

Plato, Greek philosopher

For spontaneous play:

- View the interaction as relationship building and strengthening rather than focusing on completion of an activity or competition.
- Consider engaging in imaginative play with or without toys.
- Keep in mind that any toy can be adapted for intergenerational use, especially when young and old use conversation to enhance the play.

For planned play activities:

- Again, view the interaction as relationship building and strengthening rather than focusing on completion of an activity or competition.
- Begin interactions with conversation starters and ice breakers. Make sure that everyone is comfortable with the situation and each other before starting to play. A toy may be useful as an ice breaker.
- Think about the objectives and goals for the intergenerational interaction ahead of time. Consider the amount of time needed for the activity as well as the attention span of the participants. Developmental differences can affect energy levels, attention span and tolerance for mess and noise level.¹³
- Have the toys/games and all related material and supplies readily available, read the directions and think about the age and developmental abilities of all participants prior to starting to play and adapt the activity to include everyone and maximize interaction.¹⁴
- Think about who should lead the interaction—this can involve taking turns or leadership based on the strengths of the participants.
- Plan for more activities than you think you will need. You never know what may happen and you can always use them in the future.

Most importantly, keep in mind that intergenerational play should be mutually beneficial for all involved and the focus needs to be on the interaction rather than the activity or completion of the activity. Always determine the objectives and goals of the interaction ahead of time, and keep in mind that an admirable goal is to just have fun with one another.

To download and print out copies of this brochure, visit www.playisforever.com or www.gu.org

PLAY IS FOREVER

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL PLAY

SUGGESTED TOYS

There are a wide range of toys that can enhance intergenerational relationships and provide an enjoyable playtime for children and older adults. The following examples are suggestions only and not endorsed by Generations United or Toy Industry Association Inc.

\$ < \$15

\$ \$ \$15-\$25

\$ \$ \$ \$26-\$40

Make A Match

Floggs

Recommended for ages 5+. Flip the hardwood playing pieces to find a matching pair for each of the five symbols (a boat, ball, leaf, crab, and apple). Floggs are "shuffled" throughout the game so each turn is different from the last.

www.grapegames.com



Poppo

Recommended for ages 4+. Pop the lettered dice in the candy-colored poppers and try to match with the words on the 100 illustrated cards. The game takes just minutes to play, and kids can beat adults, making it fun

for both sides. www.poppo.com



Zingo

Recommended for ages 4-8. In this fast-paced variant of Bingo, players pull the Zinger forward to reveal two mystery tiles, then try to be the first to call out the tiles that match the images on their cards. The game encourages reading and spelling skills as well as memorization and matching.



Design and Build

Automoblox, Mini Automoblox

Recommended for ages 3-8. Enjoy the hands-on fun of playing with a classic wooden car, reminiscent of some great car toys of the past, while creating your own unique car with this mix-and-match design system. www.automoblox.com



Ultimate LEGO® & Ultimate LEGO® DUPLO Tubs

Recommended for ages 1.5+. Build anything you can imagine with an assortment of bricks, either in the DUPLO size for age 1 1/2+ or the LEGO System size for 4+. Includes photos to inspire ideas. www.lego.com



Get Acquainted

Family Feud Electronic Tabletop Game

Recommended for ages 8+. The classic TV game show comes to life in an electronic format for the entire family with more than 1000 questions.

www.itoys.ca



Whoonu

Recommended for ages 8+. Does your mom like scented markers more than swimming in the ocean? Guess each other's favorite things and laugh, share stories, and get know each other since each round reveals



SUGGESTED TOYS

(continued)

1 2 3

Green and Back to Nature

Butterfly Garden

Recommended for ages 4+. See the amazing metamorphosis of live caterpillars with this life cycle kit. After the butterflies hatch, set them free together as a family.

www.insectlore.com



Desert Hothouse

Recommended for ages 4+. Design and create your own desert scene, with cacti, succulents, boulders, and more, and learn about water conservation. Plant and watch it grow together with minimal care.

www.dunecraft.com



Indoor/Outdoor Play

Boochie

Recommended for ages 8+. Toss the soft foam Boochie target and then land your ball and hoop as close to it as possible. The game has multiple skill levels in simultaneous play, offering challenge for all ages. Keep score on a special wrist tracker that gives you a new throwing challenge every round.

www.gamewright.com

Hyper Dash

Recommended for ages 6+. Electronic tagger uses radio frequency identification to call out targets that players need to strike. Fun, lively game promotes listening, memory, math and coordination skills.

www.wildplanet.com



Strategy, Logic and Luck

Blokus

Recommended for ages 5+. Each player places a brightly-colored square on the board, which must touch at least one other piece of the same color, but only at the corners. The goal is to use all your pieces.

www.educationalinsights.com



Monopoly

Recommended for ages 8+. Families come together to buy, sell and build in this classic property trading game, first introduced in 1935. If you can't wait until age eight, there is Monopoly Town recommended for ages 4+.

www.hasbro.com



Rummikub

Recommended for ages 8+. Be the first player to eliminate all the tiles from your rack by forming them into sets of runs and groups. The rules are simple, and the game is strategic.

www.pressmantoy.com



Word Play

Bananagrams

Recommended for ages 7+. Players race to complete their own crossword grid with 144 letter tiles. Fast portable word game with no board, paper, or timer.

www.bananagrams-intl.com



Buzzword

Recommended for age 10+. Team members bring their unique knowledge to the game to solve a set of 10 clues where all answers contain the buzzword. The game encourages discussion and team work.

www.patchproducts.com



SUGGESTED TOYS

(continued)

\$

\$\$

Discovery Toys

Balls, Blocks, Puppets, Coloring and Dolls

Recommended for ages 6 mos +, depending on the make of the toys. These toys encourage physical, social and language development for infants, toddlers, children and adults and are perfect for intergenerational interaction. Companies with a great selection for ages 3 and under: alextoys.us, crayola.com, folkmanis.com, jakkspacific.com, manhattantoy.com, megabrand.com, melissaanddoug.com, & others.



\$\$

Little People Surprise Sounds Zoo

Recommended for ages 1 – 4. The zoo is a fun, interactive playset that features peek-a-boo surprises and fun animal sound effects. Toddlers can play with the monkey, zebra, seal, hippo, and lion in their "home" habitats. This toy encourages children to share, take turns and cooperate. www.fisherprice.com



\$\$

Invent

Inventions

Recommended for ages 8+. Children and adults work together to make a real radio, a clicking telegraph, and more. Clear step-by-step directions and illustrations teach "why" as well as "how" things work. www.sciencewiz.com



\$\$

Storytelling

Create Your Own Pop-Up Books

Recommended for ages 5+. Everyone has a story to tell, and this kit helps you write and draw in two hardcover pop-up books, with stickers, designs, markers, and story-starter ideas. www.creativityforkids.com

\$\$

Felt Tales

Recommended for ages 4-7. Take turns telling stories with FeltTales storyboards and pieces which are portable and durable. Choose from 16 themes in imaginative role play, from a birthday party to a day at the beach. www.felttales.com



\$\$\$

Read, Sing and Dance

Plug N Sing Karaoke

Recommended for ages 3-8. This Portable Handheld Microphone DVD Karaoke Converter will convert any DVD player and TV into a karaoke system for the entire family. www.emersonkaraoke.com



\$\$

"The Jester Has Lost His Jingle"

by David Saltzman

Recommended for all ages. A quest ends with finding laughter in the heart of an ill child, and the laughter spreads throughout the world. The story's joyful language encourages children to finish each rhyme, and the adventure stimulates conversation about challenging situations. Soft doll sold separately for ages 3+. www.thejester.org



RESOURCES

or further information regarding intergenerational programs, policies and strategies, please contact: Generations United (GU), 1331 H Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20005; phone: (202) 289-3979; e-mail: gu@gu.org; website: www.gu.org.

For further information regarding play, toys and toy safety, please contact: Toy Industry Association, Inc., 1115 Broadway, Suite 400, New York, NY 10010; phone: 212-675-1141; email: info@toyassociation.org; websites: www.toyassociation.org and www.toyinfo.org

Generations United, a membership organization of over 100 national, state, and local organizations representing more than 70 million Americans, works to improve the lives of children, youth, and older people through intergenerational strategies, programs, and public policies.

Toy Industry Association, Inc. (TIA) is the not-for-profit trade association for producers and importers of toys and youth entertainment products sold in North America, representing over 500 companies who account for almost 85% of domestic toy sales. Associate members include licensors, designers, inventors, safety consultants, testing laboratories, communications professionals and the media.

Written: March 2008 © Copyright 2008, Generations United and Toy Industry Association, Inc. Reprinting is permissible provided Generations United and Toy Industry Association, Inc. are credited and no profits are made.

Cover photo: L. Roger Turner
Back cover photo: Alice Everhart



Want a fun, easy way to enjoy lifelong benefits for your heart and mind?

PLAY!

NOTES

- ¹ Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), (1998). Play from birth to twelve: Contexts, perspectives, and meanings. NY: Garland Press, p. 236.
- ² Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 236.
- ³ Heracleous, L & Jacobs, C. (2005). The Serious Business of Play. MITManagement Sloan Review, 47(1), 19-20.
- ⁴ Davis, L., Larkin, E. & Graves, S. (2002). Intergenerational play and learning. International Journal of Early Childhood, 34(2), 42-49.
- ⁵ Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 297.
- ⁶ National Toy Council – Intergenerational Play. Toys and Children. (Internet). Available: http://www.btha.co.uk/pdfs/intergenerational_play.pdf
- ⁷ Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 283.
- ⁸ Fromberg, D. & Bergen, D. (Eds.), 1998. p. 284.
- ⁹ National Toy Council.
- ¹⁰ Ostir, G.V., Ottenbacher, K.J. & Maarkides, K. S. (2004). Onset of Frailty in Older Adults And the Protective Role of Positive Affect. Journal of Psychology and Aging, 19(3), 402-408.
- ¹¹ Jarrott, Shannon, et al. (2007). Tried and True: A Guide to Successful Intergenerational Activities at Shared Site Programs. Washington, DC: Generations United.
- ¹² Davis, L., Larkin, E. & Graves, S., 2002.
- ¹³ Jarrott, Shannon, et al., 2007.
- ¹⁴ Jarrott, Shannon, et al., 2007.

**generations
united**
Because we're stronger together

1331 H Street NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005
Tel: 202-289-3979


Toy Industry Association, Inc.

1115 Broadway, Suite 400
New York, NY 10010
Tel: 212-675-1141