



THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
EXTENSION WELCOME YOU AND YOUR
CHILD TO OUR

Block Party!

-come explore the world of blocks-



^{UW}
Extension
Door County



Children are born learners.

Every day, they learn new skills they will build upon as they grow. Children need experiences to be stimulating, fun and interactive. Adults can guide children's early learning experiences and use blocks as the tools to support their development. Playing with blocks can provide the experiences for children to learn math and science, new words and pre-reading skills, social skills and physical skills.



Credits:

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Southern District Family Living colleagues contributing to the Block Party include:

- ◆ Bev Doll, Grant County
- ◆ Karen Ehle-Traastad, Vernon County
- ◆ Angie Flickinger, Rock County
- ◆ Patti Herman, Columbia County
- ◆ Kathy Hetzel, Dodge County
- ◆ Joan Laurion, Dane County
- ◆ Bridget Mouchon, Green County
- ◆ Sue Nagelkerk, Sauk County
- ◆ Peggy Olive, Richland County
- ◆ Jane Schaaf, Crawford County
- ◆ Ruth Schriefer, Iowa County
- ◆ Jenny Wehmeier, Walworth County

Special appreciation to:

Dave Riley, Child Development Specialist
UW-Extension Southern District Resource Management Team

What's a Play Partner to Do?

1. Play more on the floor with the children.
2. Tell the children what they can do with blocks rather than what they can't do.
3. TALK, TALK, TALK.
4. Use open-ended questions to allow a child to explain a situation.
5. Help children to solve their own problems.
6. Vary the clean-up routines to involve children in the process.
 - Give the children a warning that clean-up time is coming.
 - Give the child a choice about how he wants to accomplish the task. "Are you going to first put away the long blocks or the short blocks?"
 - Join in with the child and make it a game.
 - Sing a clean up song together.



This handbook opens the door for you to make the most of block play.

Unit blocks, magnetic blocks, cardboard blocks, pattern blocks, bristle blocks, and any blocks-

It's Always a...



The University of Wisconsin-Extension welcomes you and your child to Block Party!

Enjoy exploring the world of blocks!

MATH SKILLS

Blocks are a tool for learning MATH!

When children play with blocks, they can learn:

- ♦ **Counting/quantity**
How many blue blocks do you have?
- ♦ **Shapes**
Can you find another square block?
- ♦ **Sizes**
Try this smaller block and see if it fits.
- ♦ **Adding and Subtracting**
Add two more blocks to the tower.
- ♦ **Sorting**
Let's find all the green blocks and put them away first.
- ♦ **Patterns**
You used a pattern: red, yellow, blue... red, yellow, blue
- ♦ **Putting things in order**
Line the blocks up, smallest to largest



To encourage **PHYSICAL SKILLS** in your child, use words such as:

Stop	Go	Up	Down	Balance
Move	Pick	Drop	Walk	Sit
Bend	Kneel	Tiptoe	Reach	Stack
Hold	Push	Carry	Touch	Strong
Gentle	Careful	Slow	Quick	Pass

Physical Skills in Action:

- ♦ *The children were building a tall block tower. They had to bend over to pick up blocks, grab the blocks with their hands and stretch to reach the top of the tower. They then walked very carefully around it so they wouldn't knock it over. What it means: These children are developing both large and small muscles and learning to control their bodies in space.*
- ♦ *Two boys sat on the floor, building a block road for their cars. They lined their blocks up end-to-end, making sure the edges touched. They then jumped back and forth over the road, laughing. What it means: These children are using the small muscles in their fingers to carefully line up the blocks. Jumping uses large muscles, developing both strength and control.*

PHYSICAL SKILLS

Blocks are a tool for learning **PHYSICAL SKILLS!**

When playing with blocks, children can learn:

- ♦ **Eye-hand coordination**
Stack these blocks up-one on top of each other.
- ♦ **Small muscles skills**
Let's pick up these blocks and put them in this bucket.
- ♦ **Large muscle skills**
Bending, stretching, reaching, and walking when playing with blocks.
- ♦ **Impulse control**
I like how you are controlling your hands so you don't knock it over.
- ♦ **Strengthen**
These are heavy! Can you carry them?
- ♦ **Where their body is in comparison to the space around them**
You walked around John's blocks so carefully!



Use a **MATH vocabulary** with your child.

Use words such as:

Long	Tall	Curve
Narrow	Add	How many
Count	Order	Square
Triangle	Top	Take away
Square	More	Less
Least	Pattern	Measure
Estimate	Larger	Short

Math in action:

- ♦ *A child tells a friend that her tower is bigger because she used more blocks. What it means: this child is using words to compare quantity (i.e. more, less, greater than, fewer, same).*
- ♦ *A child makes a 'fence' by alternating square and rectangle blocks. What it means: this child recognizes a pattern.*
- ♦ *A child counts blocks and then asks a friend for four more. What it means: this child understand that a number means "how many" or a quantity.*
- ♦ *A child stacks five rows of five blocks each and counts 5, 10, 15, 20, 25. What it means: this child is counting by fives and gaining an understanding of the basic facts of multiplication.*

SCIENCE SKILLS

Blocks are a tool for learning SCIENCE!

When playing with blocks, children can learn:

- ◆ **Observing**
This block is very smooth.
- ◆ **Comparing**
Which tower is taller?
- ◆ **Guessing**
Do you think one more block will make it will fall over?
- ◆ **Experimenting**
Try it and see what happens!
- ◆ **Cause and Effect**
It fell over because the top block was too big
- ◆ **Weight**
Which block is lighter?



To encourage SOCIAL SKILLS in your child, use words such as:

Share	Feelings	Take turns	Decide
Friend	Cooperate	Stop	Easy
Encourage	Respect	Patience	Hard
Wait	Choice	Self-control	Start
Angry	Happy	Limits	Listen
Frustrated	Help	Afraid	Alone
Ask	Create	Pretend	
Imagine	Think	Together	

Social Skills in Action:

- ◆ *A girl was playing with blocks and a boy sat down next to him and asked, "Can I play with you?" The girl responded, "No-these are my blocks!" The boy became quiet, obviously upset with her response. The girl pushed some of her blocks over to him and said, "Well here. You can play with these." What it means: The boy showed he knew how to ask, rather than just take away toys. The girl responded to his hurt feelings and decided to share her blocks. They are both developing social skills.*



SOCIAL SKILLS

Blocks are a tool for learning **SOCIAL SKILLS!**

When children play with blocks, they can learn to:

- ◆ **Share**
There are enough blocks for you and your brother to both build something.
- ◆ **Solve problems**
How can we both use these blocks and be firefighters?
- ◆ **Recognize feelings**
It makes him angry when I tell him what to do.
- ◆ **Work together**
How about if you are the firefighter and I'm the ambulance driver?
- ◆ **Take turns**
You can have these when I'm done.
- ◆ **Live with limits**
No throwing blocks. Keep the blocks in this area.
- ◆ **Use self-control**
I know you really want to knock down that tower. You're doing a good job of staying away from it.
- ◆ **Making choices**
Do you want to play with Legos or with the wooden blocks this morning?
- ◆ **Respect**
That sure was a good idea you had.

Use a **SCIENCE** vocabulary.

Use words such as:

Rough	Next	Smallest	Balance
Heavy	Series	Whole	Light
Bigger	Stable	Motion	Flat
Incline	Explore	Predict	Weight
Cause	Size	Compare	Solve
Smooth	What if	Gravity	First
Discover			

Science in action:

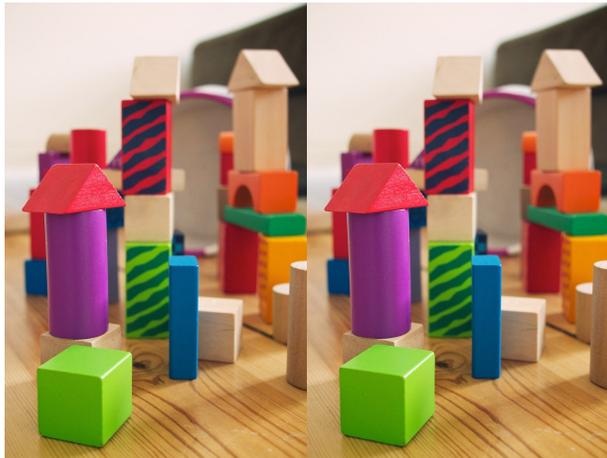
- ◆ *A young child carries blocks around in his hands and places them in a bucket. What it means: this child is learning about weight and size.*
- ◆ *A toddler builds a block tower, then laughs as she knocks it down. What it means: this child is experimenting with cause and effect.*
- ◆ *A first-grader wants to put the wooden blocks down first when building a tower, so the foam blocks don't get squished. What it means: this child understands that there are several factors to keep in mind when building stable structures.*
- ◆ *As children build structures, encourage them to observe their work, ask questions and plan or predict what will happen next. "What would happen if you set the big rectangle block on the round column block?" "How do you think your castle would be different, if you used the foam blocks instead of the cardboard blocks?"*

NEW WORDS AND PRE-READING SKILLS

Blocks are a tool for learning NEW WORDS and building PRE-READING SKILLS!

When playing with blocks, children can learn:

- ♦ **Pretending**
This block can be my cell phone!
- ♦ **New words**
This block is shaped like a rectangle. It's rectangular.
- ♦ **Letters and Printing**
Let's make a sign for the store you built.
- ♦ **Storytelling**
Tell me a story about what you are building.
- ♦ **Listening**
Let's ask your sister to tell us a story about her building too.



To build LANGUAGE SKILLS, keep children thinking and talking.

For example, encourage them to draw a picture of their block structures and explain what they are building and drawing.

Use phrases such as:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| What would happen | Tell me about |
| How will you know | What do you think |
| What's the same about | What would make it |
| What's the difference between | |

Language and Literacy in action:

- ♦ *A young child puts a rectangular block to his ear and "talks on the phone." This pretending is important. If a block can be changed into a phone, then eventually shapes and lines on a page can become words. Words are symbols that stand for very real things.*
- ♦ *A child writes "SV" on a paper and puts it on a block structure to let others know it is to be "saved." What it means: this child is paying attention to the sounds in words and letters and is using writing to share her ideas.*
- ♦ *A child tells a story about the princess in the block castle. What it means: this child is using imagination and learning that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. If an adult will write down the story, the child learns that words we say can be put in writing.*