



THE BENEFITS OF FREE PLAY

Free play teaches children about leadership and problem solving that an organized, coach-led team may not allow.

Children who grow up on the playground and compete for the fun of it have an advantage because they adapt to different roles depending on whom they play with.

Here are six skills children can learn from free play:

- 1 Physical skills.** Simple games such as tag, follow the leader, and ping-pong address important skills including speed, reaction time, hand-eye coordination, balance, and how to fall down.
- 2 Footwork.** The same crossovers, lead steps, and backpedals players use in football are there in basketball, soccer, tennis, lacrosse, dodgeball, and dozens of other sports.
- 3 Mental balance.** If you play enough
- 4 Courage.** It's hard competing against older, more talented kids. By stretching the boundaries of comfort, children go beyond what they may think is possible.
- 5 Visualization.** Whether riding a bike, bearing down on a skateboard, or trying not to get tackled, it's about keeping your head up and watching the angles.
- 6 Decision making.** With no adults in charge on the field, kids are pretty good at finding common ground. After all, everyone wants to get back

J games around the house or at the park, you are going to lose a few. Dealing with disappointment is a key lesson for children.

to the game.

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