

# PLAYTIME

## Six Amazing Benefits of Water Play for Children



The summer is here and it's the perfect time for getting the children outside and having some fun with water!

It may be one of the most entertaining ways of cooling off on hot days, but there is much more to water play than meets the eye.

Water play provides valuable childhood experiences through hours of absorbing fun. Children love it - splashing and pouring, spraying and creating waves. It enhances their creativity and imagination, promotes good health and well-being and provides opportunities for some wonderful investigative and scientific learning.

We have some really exciting water-play activities taking place at the Whitworth this summer. Whether your little ones are getting ready to start school, or just enjoying a break from the normal routine, come and join us for some *splashtastic* fun!

### What is it about water play that is so good for children?

#### 1 ~ Water play promotes well-being

Water play can be a wonderfully calming, therapeutic activity, especially for children who are a little hyperactive and enjoy the soothing touch of water and the sensory stimulation that it offers.

Focusing on one gentle and repetitive activity such as scooping, sieving or running their hands through the water can really help a child to relax and unwind. This is a useful technique for improving their ability to concentrate, too.

On the other hand, some lively splashing is a great outlet for pent-up energy, allowing kids to let off steam, have fun, laugh, play, be happy (surely the most important thing of all!).

## 2 - Water play is good for physical development

Water play is incredibly good for a child's physical development, even if they are just sitting quietly to play.

All that scooping, swooshing, squeezing, squirting and pouring helps to develop hand to eye coordination and to develop fine motor skills that they need for all-important life skills: holding a pen to write, manipulating a knife and fork, getting dressed by themselves - pretty much anything that need to do with their own hands.

And when their play gets more physical - running through sprinklers, dodging the spray, carrying heavy buckets full of water - it's great physical exercise and helps to develop their gross motor skills, core strength and balance.

## 3 - Water play stimulates imagination and creativity

The marvellous thing about water is its versatility, which can really stretch children's imaginations and allow them to be creative in their play. Give them a tub of water and they will soon have turned it into a make-believe world, where storms rage, sea-creatures dwell and all sorts of vessels sink or sail!

Water can be presented in many different ways to spark interest. Whether poured, channelled, sprinkled or sprayed, mixed with bubbles or coloured dye, played with alongside other materials that float, sink, repel or absorb the water - anything goes!

## 4 - Water play enhances cognitive development

Of course, the children won't realise it, because they will be far too busy having fun, but they very essence of water play intrinsically involves scientific learning, maths and problem-solving skills.

They will be exploring and experimenting, discovering water properties and changes in state, learning about temperature, finding out what floats and sinks, how water travels or moves other objects, the effects of gravity, measuring volume and quantity, learning mathematical concepts such as more/less, empty/full, equal to/different, discovering how their own actions can influence the water - the list goes on - and it's super hands-on learning!

## 5 ~ Water play develops language and communication skills

There's a whole host of new vocabulary that goes hand-in-hand with water play.

From the tools used to play with it, to the fantastic verbs and adjectives that describe how the water moves, feels, looks, sounds, there is so much opportunity for engaging discussion and social interaction around new word choices.

Even if children are playing alone, more often than not, they will be narrating the situation to themselves; they'll be working out concepts and finding ways to describe what is happening, placing new words together and building sentence structure and listening to others and learning how to converse.

## 6 ~ Water play encourages social and emotional development

Playing together with water naturally involves sharing ideas and resources, turn-taking, cooperating, listening to and observing others and learning new ideas from each other. This is how children develop crucial social skills.

It is such a magical, captivating activity for young children, that it often gives them the boost they need to take their first steps from playing alongside other children, to actually interacting and playing with them. It's exactly these kinds of interactions that build friendships and create happy memories for children to treasure. What better way to spend the summer?!

This article has been written by Emma Homan who is an Outdoor Play Copywriter for Pentagon Play. The UK's leading school playground experts, Pentagon Play design outdoor learning environments for schools and nurseries across the country.

We welcome all families and children to experiment with water this summer and visit the Whitworth Art Gallery for some 'splashtastic' activities. To truly inspire children to explore the wonders of water, Pentagon Play's magnificent Water Wall will be on display alongside some other fun resources at the Playtime event this summer.

Pentagon Play's Water Wall is an excitingly interactive STEAM learning resource, which combines sensory water-play with investigative learning. It invites children to have fun planning and assembling their own routes for water to travel, pumping it between reservoirs and watching it cascade through a series of channels and water wheels.

Please visit: [pentagonplay.co.uk](http://pentagonplay.co.uk) for more information

