

The importance of play

Pre-School Lesson Plan

Children explore sound, movement and self-expression in a joyful play parade



What does UNICEF do?

UNICEF is the world's largest children's charity working to protect children, globally and here in Australia. We help children realise their full potential by providing access to clean water, lifesaving vaccines, quality education and health care. We ensure every child is safe and protected from harm and we're always there during times of emergency.

UNICEF and the importance of play

Play is an important part of children's learning and growth – it's how they explore their environment, practice developing skills and bond with the people around them.

Did you know play is actually a right? According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, every child has the right to rest, relax, play and take part in cultural and creative activities.

UNICEF champions the transformative power of play for children in Australia and overseas. Unfortunately, many children around the world lack access to play opportunities, particularly those affected by malnutrition or living in challenging circumstances. UNICEF works to address these challenges through initiatives like repurposing materials for play, promoting access to safe play spaces and advocating for every child to have the opportunity to play, as a fundamental right and crucial tool for learning, health and development.



Activity Overview

Children explore sound, movement and joyful self-expression by using their bodies and surroundings to create their own musical rhythms. They will then participate in a joyful “Play Parade” around the centre to celebrate play and creativity. This activity supports **Article 31 – Children’s Right to Play and Express Themselves Freely** and links to the **Sustainable Development Goals**.

Mapped to ELYF Curricula Outcomes in Appendix at the back.

Materials Needed



Digital Screen with internet connection:

The Magic of Play UNICEF:

<https://youtu.be/Hmlc91NGO0s?si=e4LIId7gInAeKEhXr> (1:02 sec)

NOTE: Preview the video to ensure it’s appropriate for your students



Use own **bodies** and/or **classroom (tables/chairs)** to create sounds



Select a piece of **rhythmic music** that students can march to



Optional:

- Use existing classroom instruments
- Music player (optional, for background music)

Learning Intention

We are learning how to:

- Use our bodies and classroom objects to make different sounds
- Listen and copy rhythms
- Work together to make music as a group

Success Criteria

- I can make sounds using my hands, feet and voice
- I can listen carefully and copy a beat or sound
- I can take turns and make music with my friends

Lesson Structure

Activity 1: Play connects us all

- Educators discuss with students:

What is play?

Play is what we do when we're having fun! It's how we learn, explore and use our imagination. We can play on our own, with friends or in a group — and it helps our brains and bodies grow.

How do we play?

- *We can play in lots of ways!*
We can:
 - *Run, jump and move*
 - *Build with blocks*
 - *Pretend to be someone else*
 - *Sing songs or make music*
 - *Paint, draw or make things*
 - *Tell stories or make up games with our friends*

What might it look like when we play?

- When we play, you might see:
 - *Smiles and laughter*
 - *Children working together or taking turns*
 - *Dancing, singing or pretending*
 - *Busy hands building or making things*
 - *Listening and sharing ideas*

Play can be quiet or loud, calm or busy — and it's always a way to learn and have fun!

- *Let's watch this video and see all the different ways we can play.*

Digital Screen with internet connection

The Magic of Play UNICEF:

<https://youtu.be/Hmlc91NGO0s?si=e4LIId7gInAeKEhXr> (1:02 sec)

- Briefly explain children's **Right to Play** and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) links

Did you know that play is not just fun – it's also recognised as important by leaders around the world? Play is part of a big global agreement called the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs. These 17 goals were created in 2015 to help make the world a better, fairer and healthier place for everyone by the year 2030.

Play supports many of these goals, like:

Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing – *Play helps us stay active, healthy and happy.*

Goal 4: Quality Education – Through play, children learn new skills, explore ideas and grow their imagination.

Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities – Play should be for every child, no matter where they live or what their background is.

So, when you play, you're not just having fun – you're also helping to build a better world!

Activity 2: Exploring Musical Play

- Educator asks students:
 - *How can we use music, song and dance to play?*
- Educator explains:
 - *Today, we're going to have fun with music — singing, moving and making sounds together! When we play music, we're not just having fun, we're also learning. Music helps us listen carefully, use our words, remember things and move our bodies in different ways. Making music together helps us work as a team, take turns and feel happy and connected. Every sound we make, every beat we clap and every song we sing helps our brains and bodies grow strong.*

Activity 3: Sound Explorers: Body & Object Percussion

- Introduce children to different sounds (shake, tap, beat) using the steps below.

Step 1: Gather in a Circle

Explain: *Today we're going to be sound explorers! We're going to use our bodies and things around us to make music.*

Step 2: Start With Body Sounds

Ask children to copy you as you try each sound:

- **Clap hands** – *"Clap, clap, clap!"*
- **Tap knees** – *"Tap, tap on our laps."*
- **Stomp feet** – *"Let's stomp like elephants!"*
- **Click tongues or snap fingers** – *"Can we make a clicking sound?"*
- **Rub hands together** – *"What sound do we hear now?"*

Step 3: Add Object Sounds

Now let's see what sounds we can make with things around us!

Discuss with students what items might be suitable to do this with.

NOTE: Remind children to be gentle and respectful with classroom objects.

Try with the class:

- **Tapping the floor** with fingers
- **Gently drumming** on tables or chairs
- **Shaking** a box of crayons or small container
- **Sliding** hands across surfaces for a swooshy sound

Step 4: Make a Rhythm Together

Choose one sound (e.g. clapping) and have everyone do it together in a slow, steady beat.

- Try layering: one group claps, other taps knees, another stomps.

Step 5: Freeze & Reflect

Say: *"Freeze! What sounds did we hear? Which one was your favourite?"*

- Let children share and describe the sounds they made.

Activity 4: Play Parade!

- Using their preferred musical body sound, students march around the space (inside or outside), to a song of your choice.
- Educator can encourage rhythm and coordination by keeping a beat using a clap, stomp, drum, tambourine or shaker.
- Celebrate creativity and movement with claps and cheers.

Assessment:

- Observe how children engage with materials (confidence, persistence).
- Note language used to describe sounds or instruments.
- Assess participation, enjoyment and how children interact with others during the parade.

Follow-Up Activity:

- Invite children to perform with their body instrument in pairs or at group time.
- Explore cultural instruments from around the world (link to multicultural understanding).



More Teacher Resources and Lesson plans
are available on UNICEF Australia's website
unicef.org.au/teacher-resources

Appendix: Alignment to Curriculum

The Early Learning Years Framework for Australia (V2.0, 2022)

Target Audience: Children aged 3-5 years

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 4 – Children are confident and involved learners

- Children develop a growth mindset and learning dispositions such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity.

Evident when children,

- are curious and enthusiastic participants in their learning
- initiate and contribute to play experiences emerging from their own ideas
- engage in creative experiences such as art, dance and drama
- use their senses to play, explore and try new things.

Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes.

Evident when children,

- engage in enjoyable interactions using verbal and non-verbal language
- use language and representations from play, music and art to share and project meaning
- contribute their ideas and experiences in play, small and large group discussions
- listen to and act upon simple directions.

- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.

Evident when children,

- sing and chant rhymes, jingles and songs.

- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media.

Evident when children,

- use materials to create art works (e.g. drawing, painting, sculpture, drama, dance, movement, music and storytelling) to express ideas and make meaning.

Learning Intention

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