

PLAYWORK ESSENTIALS



An introduction to essential playwork skills and
knowledge for all adults working in schools

Definition



Play is a process which is...

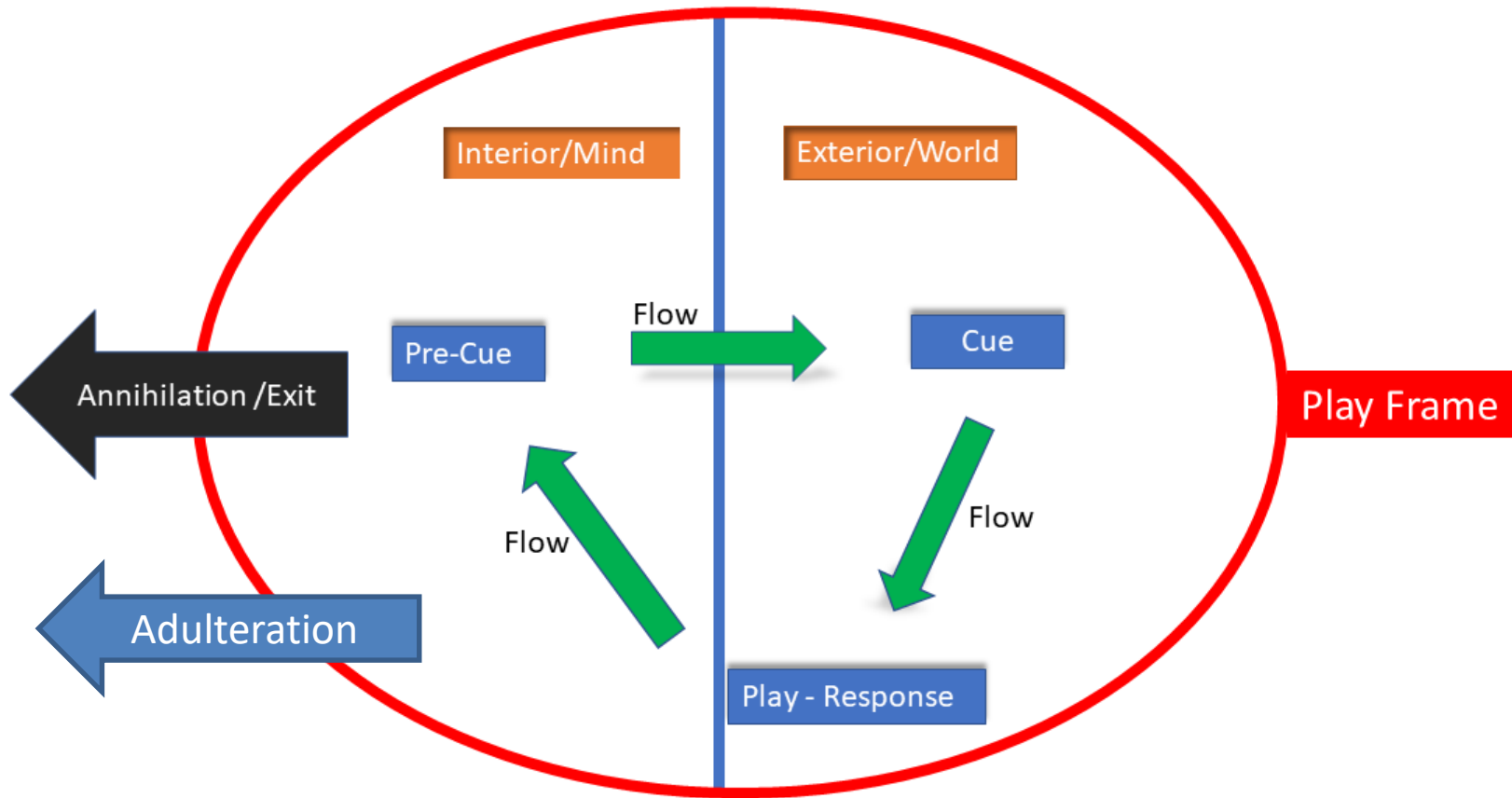
Freely chosen

Self directed

Intrinsically motivated

...by the child

THE PLAY CYCLE



The Play Types



Symbolic Play



Locomotor Play



Recapitulative Play



Creative Play



Exploratory Play



Communication Play



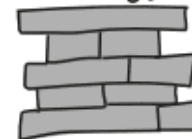
Socio-dramatic Play



Role Play



Fantasy Play



Deep Play



Object Play



Mastery Play



Rough and Tumble Play



Dramatic Play



Social Play



Imaginative Play

Schema in Play 1



Trajectory: is all about movement in a clear direction, including running, riding, and throwing.

Rotation: is the exploration of anything circular, especially anything that rotates.

Enclosing: is about being enclosed in cosy and comfortable spaces or enclosing others.

Enveloping: is similar to enclosing but is about wrapping up, or placing objects inside other objects.

Schema in Play 2



Positioning: is the placement of objects or themselves in lines patterns or sequences

Transporting: the movement of everything from one place to another

Connecting: exploring how to join objects, people and materials together.

Transforming: how materials or people can change their nature and appearance.

Playwork Principles



1. UNDERSTAND NEED

All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals.

2. UNDERSTAND PROCESS

Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.

3. SUPPORT PROCESS

The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.

4. ADVOCATE FOR PLAY

For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult led agendas.

Playwork Principles



5. CREATE SPACES

The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.

6. LEARN AND REFLECT

The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, reflective practice.

7. UNDERSTAND ADULT IMPACT

Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.

8. CHOOSE INTERVENTION STYLES

Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.

The purpose of **Benefit-Risk Assessments** are to enable you to provide challenge, progression, excitement, creativity and fun in your play environment.

They cannot and will not provide complete ‘safety’ and this is not their purpose.

They can help you to think about, predict, and manage the most serious and most likely potential causes of harm.

- **Standing Benefit-Risk Assessments**
- **Dynamic Risk Management.**



Ranging Supervision



If you are being asked to practice ranging supervision you will need to include the following;

1. Understand your range. How big is it? Are there areas that are hidden or have greater potential risk? How do you communicate with colleagues in a hurry?
2. Where are your children? What are they doing? You will need to be walking your range for much of your shift. You should know who is playing in the different parts of it, what and who they are playing with, and how risky the play is.
3. You should, and the children should, **keep your range free of hazards and litter.** Are there any planks with nails, are there sharp bits of plastics or are there glass bottles in the bushes? Are there any really sharp branches just at child eye level?

Rope play requires special vigilance and care (see the OPAL guidance sheet).

Wires and twine should be removed altogether.

Playwork Intervention Styles 1



WAIT

to be invited to play – this doesn't have to be verbally, it can be a gesture or other action by the child (play cue)

ENABLE

play to occur uninterrupted – don't interfere, manipulate or take over

LEAVE

the content/intent of play to children- let them decide what they want to do and how to do it

ALLOW

children to decide what is appropriate behaviour – as far as practicable taking into account age, culture and setting

Playwork Intervention Styles 2



SUPPORT

children to explore their own values as far as possible - they learn more about right and wrong from their peers than from playworkers

ONLY

organise when children want you to - you don't need to organise 'entertainment' for children unless they specifically ask you for ideas

LET

children decide why they play - there's no need for rewards or end products or even to get involved if they don't want you to

PERMIT

children to improve their own performance- don't constantly offer to help, unless something is detrimental to their well being

Playwork Pointers



Intention When you go into the playground each day, do so with the intention that you will do something to improve the quality of play

Action Do something with loose parts or the environment that makes a change to how it was before. – Draw out the rooms of a house in chalk - Put resources in a place they have not been before – Use loose parts to build a scene, e.g. vets, shop, hospital, hair salon

Observation Watch what children are doing and ask what you can do to help make it better or more fun. Can we make it stronger, safer? Do you need more of certain resources?

Playwork pointers 2



Example Do something playful and interesting yourself and watch children join in, then slowly leave and let the children get on with it.

- Make a model stick and leaf house
- Invent and play a new game
- Start building something with loose parts

Invitation When you are observing play, be alert to whether you are being invited to join or leave the play (play cue). If you are invited to join, then try to follow, not lead or take over.

Playwork pointers 3



Consistency Talk to your colleagues, so that you are all agreed about how you do things and so that the messages you give to children are consistent.

Respect Children are sensitive, and will copy adult behaviours much more than words. If you need to address an issue always be respectful, come down to their level, and don't point or raise your voice. Always praise in public and reprimand in private.



Summary

Play is a right not a privilege

Play is chosen, directed and motivated by the child

Adults supporting play should

- Be aware of the play cycle, support it, and enrich it
- Support and enrich the 16 play types and 7 schema
- Act like a playworker using the playwork principles
- Be reflective with your intervention styles

What now?



Play is hugely important

You are the people that can make it
better