

# Stages of Play

**Unoccupied play** The child is not playing, just observing

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**Solitary play** The child plays alone, focussed on their own activity, unaware and uninterested in what others are doing. Most common in children aged under three.

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**Onlooker play** The child watches others at play but does not engage in it. They may talk about the play, but they do not join in. Most common in children aged 2-3 years

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**Parallel play** The child plays separately but close to others often mimicking their actions. Often seen as the beginning of more complex social play. Most common in children aged 2 1/2-4 years

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**Associative play** The child is interested in playing with others and interacts with others during play, but the activity is not organised or co-ordinated. Most common in children aged 3- 4 years

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**Cooperative play** The child is interested both in the people playing and in the activity. The activity is organised, and participants have assigned roles. This is the beginning of 'team work'. Most common in children aged 4 1/2 - 6+ years.

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Adapted from Mildred Parten's Stages of Play theory  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parten%27s\\_stages\\_of\\_play](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parten%27s_stages_of_play)