

### Stages of Development of Social Play

Mildred Parten (1932) research is still cited today. She researched the development of social play in children (2-5 years of age). She discovered that a child's development of his/her social skills is reflected in the way they play. She also found that once a child has developed the ability to participate in a particular stage of social play, he/she will use different variations and combinations of that stage, and earlier stages, throughout play. Research Summary Reference: Retrieved from: <http://ccpdi.usu.edu/files/uploads/z-play2.pdf> on February 8, 2014

Stages of Development	What it looks like:	What age it typically appears:
Solitary play	Children play alone, with their own toys. They do not get close to or interact with other children. Solitary play should be encouraged because it builds skills for working independently.	Birth-2 years
Parallel play	Children continue to play on their own, but they are beside children and may be using the same toys.	2 ½ to 3 ½ years
Associative play	Children begin to truly play with others. They share play materials but may be following their own story line.	3 years **More recent research has shown that associative play often develops before age 3 ½.
Cooperative play	The highest level of social play where children play in groups and everyone is cooperating to achieve a common goal. This type of play involves negotiation among children. This happens when children change "roles" in the play and/or take turns making suggestions about the plot.	4 years
Games with rules	A part of cooperative play that involves winners and losers. These games involve child-controlled rules and are not the same as competitive games, like sports. These games show an understanding of the social rules in our culture.	6 + years
Onlooker Play	When a child watches other children playing but makes no attempt to join in.	Birth +

Stages of Social Play Reference: Retrieved from [http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/53567\\_ch\\_10.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/53567_ch_10.pdf) on November 26, 2013

## What about Sharing?

Learning to share is a skill that takes several years to master.

Sharing can also refer to playing or working together, cooperatively. Adults can model to children how to work together with others on crafts, during meal preparation or meal time when sharing a meal, problem-solving, or playing a game that involves turn-taking and sharing pieces (e.g., like a spinner or a key).

Stages of Development	What it looks like:	What age it typically appears:
First Stage	Everything is "mine."	2-3 years of age
Second Stage	Learn that some things belong to others.	3-5 years of age
Third Stage	<p>Children learn they can lend a toy and get it back.</p> <p>Children can learn to share more readily when they experience their toy come back to them and when they see other children share with them.</p> <p>Children and adults all need the knowledge that their things will be respected. Special toys and comfort items (like a blanket or stuffed toy) do not need to be shared.</p> <p>When children (and adults!) are tired or grumpy, they may return to the first stage of sharing!</p>	4-5 years of age

Stages of Development of Sharing Reference: Retrieved from [http://www.childaction.org/families/publications/docs/guidance/Handout13-The\\_Importance\\_of\\_Play.pdf](http://www.childaction.org/families/publications/docs/guidance/Handout13-The_Importance_of_Play.pdf) on November 26, 2013