

Big Playdate, Big Fun!

Spring Institute | March 2026

Resources

Play

American Academy of Pediatrics: "The Importance of Play in Promoting Healthy Child Development and Maintaining Strong Parent-Child Bonds" (Pediatrics, January 2007)

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/119/1/182/70699/The-Importance-of-Play-in-Promoting-Healthy-Child>

Brooklyn Public Library: Read, Play, Grow! Curriculum

<http://readplaygrow.pbworks.com/w/page/84901624/Read%2C%20Play%2C%20Grow%21%20Curriculum>

Child Development Institute: "Play is the Work of the Child"

<https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-development/play-work-of-children/>

National Institute for Play

<https://nifplay.org/>

"Read, Play, Grow!: Enhancing Early Literacy at Brooklyn Public Library" by Rachel G. Payne (School Library Journal, July 2013)

<https://www.slj.com/story/read-play-grow-enhancing-early-literacy-at-brooklyn-public-library>

Ideas & Materials

Pinterest

Dollar stores

Super useful items: tunnel, hula hoops, balance beam, kiddie pool, pool noodles, cardboard

Partner Ideas

- Fire Department
- Pet Store
- Zoo
- Restaurant
- Farmer's Market
- Credit Union
- Medical/Veterinary clinics or student groups
- Princess/Superhero group

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Activity Ideas & Resources

All Aboard (Trains)

- Train “I Spy” Slideshow
- Paper Plate Conductor Hat - [Crafty Mama in Me](#)
- Egg Carton Trains - [Hands On as We Grow](#)
- Cardboard Box Train Cars
- Coal in the Hole Beanbag Toss
- Color Sorting Train - [Fun Learning for Kids](#)
- Train Sponge Painting - [Buggy and Buddy](#)
- Train Felt Board - [Felt Board Ideas](#)

Bluey’s Big Playdate

The following crafts, activities, and games were found on [Bluey’s website](#)

- 3D Bluey & Bingo Figures
- Bluey Party Hats
- Octodad Wind Chimes
- Weave Your Own Flappy
- Find Coco Board Game
- Find the Long Dog “I Spy” Pictures
- Keepy Uppy

Circus

- Elephant (or any other circus animal) Photo Booth - [Pinterest](#)
- Puppet Show (with circus animal puppets)
- Pin the Ball on the Seal
- Obstacle Course (with rings of fire hula hoops—using red, orange, and yellow crepe paper)
- Cardboard Box Trains
- Magician Station (playing cards, top hat, rabbit puppet, magic wand)
- Knock-It-Down Game - [Pinterest](#)
- Circus Animal Putt-Putt (with shoe boxes)
- Magnet Fishing (with rubber duckies or other animals)

Fall Fun

- Paper Plate Scarecrow - [Red Ted Art](#)
- String Art Paper Plate Pumpkin - [Red Ted Art](#)
- Handprint Acorn - [The Best Ideas for Kids](#)
- Fall Food Tissue Paper Art
- Paper Bag Tree - [Natural Beach Living](#)
- Squirrel Sensory Bin
- Pin the Leaves on the Tree Wall Game

Restaurant

- Play-Doh Empanadas
- Chopsticks with Pom Poms
- Foam or Felt Sandwiches
- Paper Plate and Yarn Spaghetti - [Glued to My Craft](#)
- Play-Doh Pretzel Folding
- French Fry Counting - [Supply Me](#)
- Kebabs (with wooden skewers and chunky beads)
- Felt Tacos
- Shaving Cream Pavlova
- Table Setting Place Mats
- Menus and Order-Taking Notepads

Safari

- Foam Cup Safari Animals - [Kids Activities](#)
- Paper Bag Safari Vest - [Lil Party Animals](#)
- Paper Plate Safari Hat - [Widget Worm](#)
- Paper Binoculars
- Cardboard Box Safari Jeep with Animal Puppets - [Olli Ella](#)
- Animal Actions Obstacle Course
- Clip the Clothespin on the Lion Wall Game - [KidsSoup](#)

Tape Town

- Cover floor with roads made of tape (colored masking tape or special road tape), invite kids to bring their own vehicles and have some extras on hand - "car dealership" at entrance
- Car Wash: tunnel with crepe paper streamers on each end
- Construction Site: blocks to build with, construction vehicles, sand tub
- Monster Truck Rally: monster trucks smash over foil outlines of cars
- Train Station: train play area
- Daredevil Zone: tubes, ramps, etc. for kids to play with their vehicles
- Race Track: A speed zone where kids can race each other

Tiny Town (Community Helpers)

- Construction Worker Vest craft - [Friday Fun](#)
- Pool Noodle Construction - [Pocket of Preschool](#)
- Fire Sensory Bin - [Pinterest](#)
- School: Using puppets and whiteboards with dry erase markers
- Ice Cream Parlor - [Entertain Your Toddler](#)
- Play Kitchen (use existing kitchen from play area if available) - [Play to Learn Preschool](#)
- Cookie Shop with felt cookies - [Play to Learn Preschool](#)
- Vet Clinic with puppets - [Play to Learn Preschool](#)
- Doctor's Checklist - [Pinterest](#)
- Post Office: postcard making, obstacle course mail route - [Play to Learn Preschool](#)
- Grocery Store: play food, play cash register, play money

Other Theme Ideas

- All About Animals
- Astronaut Training/Space
- Ball Arcade
- Candy
- Construction Zone
- Detective
- Fairy Tales
- Farm
- Indoor Winterfest
- Olympics
- Park Playdate
- Pirates
- Popular Characters

The possibilities are endless! What else can you think of?

Summer Program 2026: Unearth a Story

- Obstacle course (Indiana Jones, or dinosaur actions)
- Safari vests & hats - archaeologists
- Sand sensory bin (toy dinos, plastic eggs)
- Dinosaur hat - [What Can We Do With Paper and Glue](#)
- Grocery bag dinosaur mask (CSLP manual p. 48)
- Tissue box dino feet - [Rainy Day Mum](#)
- Pasta paleontology (CSLP manual p. 140)
- Dinosaur felt board/puppets
- Scavenger hunt
- Playdough fossils
- Dinosaur tracks sponge painting - [Rainy Day Mum](#)
- Cardboard box dino (bean bag toss, sorting game) - [Rainy Day Mum](#)
- Dino stick puppets/shadow puppets - [Rainy Day Mum](#)
- Dino grab game (like Hungry Hungry Hippos) - [Rainy Day Mum](#)
- Dino egg letter match - [Rainy Day Mum](#)