

Preschool Play Plans

Bubbling Over with Fun!

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Play is critical for young children. It's a way for them to process the world around them and to learn. Through play, children build a foundation for later academic and social success. As preschool teachers, we need to make sure children have plenty of opportunities to engage in self-directed, meaningful play.

This is the first article in a TYC series, Preschool Play Plans, to get children moving, interacting, and laughing—without electronics. The play plans offer ideas for open-ended indoor and outdoor activities that use everyday, inexpensive, or free materials—bubbles, mud, chalk, playdough, and cardboard boxes. The activities are appropriate for preschoolers of all abilities. Share the activities with families—they're enjoyable for all ages!

Bubble play is just plain fun. And it helps children cooperate, take turns, and solve problems. Support learning by talking about what's happening: "You blew a huge bubble," "Your bubble floated away and popped," "You were very patient waiting for your turn." Ask simple questions: "Can you make it bigger?," "What is the wind doing to the bubbles?" Watch children



as they play to see what they're interested in. It will help you figure out what questions to ask to expand their learning.

Ideas for outdoor play with bubbles

There's no wrong way to play with bubbles. Here are some bubbly ideas for games, artwork, and science projects.



Supporting Children with Disabilities

With the right supports in place, bubble play can be fun and engaging for children of all abilities. As you plan, think about children's motor abilities: can all children move around comfortably while holding a bubble wand? If not, make sure you adjust the activities so all children are able to participate in the bubble obstacle course and bubble tag games. If a child has difficulty holding a bubble wand, try wrapping the handle with clay or play dough to make it easier to grip. If a child hasn't yet developed the oral motor skills needed to blow, have them play the games with a partner—one child can hold the wand while the other blows the bubble. Most important, be patient and encourage all children to participate in these fun activities!

Bubble Solution Recipe

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups of water
- 1 cup dishwashing liquid (Joy and Dawn work really well)
- 1/4 cup corn syrup or 1 tbs. glycerin (available at drugstores)

DIRECTIONS

Pour dishwashing liquid into water and slowly stir. Try not to let foam or bubbles form while you stir.

Add corn syrup or glycerin and stir gently until combined.

Now it's ready for blowing bubbles!

Bubble Games

Bubble relay

Use one plastic bubble wand and the bubble mixture. Invite children to stand in a line. The first child blows a bubble and passes the bubble and wand to the next child. (If the bubble pops, the child blows another bubble and passes it again.) Ask children to predict how many times they can pass the bubble without popping it.

Bubble tag

Give everyone a plastic bubble wand and a cup of bubble mixture. The person who's *it* tags with bubbles instead of hands. The bubbles must actually land on another player for the tag to be successful. Play in a small space so children are able to tag others.

Bubble obstacle course

Mark a start and a finish line and use traffic cones to create a path for children to walk on. Have children line up on either side of the course. The child who is *it* moves from start to finish dodging bubbles, trying not to let any bubbles touch him. First, one child blows bubbles. If the child successfully reaches the finish line without a bubble touching him, then two people blow bubbles, then three, etc. The more bubbles, the harder it is to make it through the course. Play until all children have had a chance to be *it*.

Photographs: pp. 13–15, © Getty Images



Bubble Art

Bubble burst artwork

Tape a sheet of white paper to a tree, a wall, or another vertical surface. Using food coloring, add drops of different colors to different paper cups of bubble mixture. Have children stand two feet away and blow bubbles toward the paper. When the bubbles touch the paper and pop—*Voila!*—a colorful masterpiece appears! Ask children what they think works best—red, purple, yellow? One big bubble or lots of small ones?

Bubble painting

Using food coloring, mix different colors into cups of bubble mixture. Place the cups on a large sheet of paper. Let children blow through straws into each cup of mixture so it spatters onto the paper. One hard blow usually makes a good splatter. (One straw per child. Remind children to blow out!)



Bubble Math

Bubble sizes

- **Tiny bubbles:** Blow through a straw—or through several straws taped together.
- **Big bubbles:** Cut off the bottom of a plastic bottle and blow through the neck.
- **Giant bubbles:** Fill a child's plastic swimming pool with bubble mixture. Have children stand around it. Place a hula hoop in the pool, and let one child stand in the pool, inside the hoop. Help the other children slowly, carefully raise the hoop to make a giant bubble around her! It might be slippery, so have children wear sneakers.

Bubble shapes

Use the ideas below to make unique bubble wands.

- **Circles, squares, triangles, hearts:** Form the shape out of pipe cleaners.
- **Free-form:** Bend wire coat hangers into large wands (be careful of sharp edges!).
- **Large squares:** Cut a piece of string about four straw lengths long. Thread the string through two straws and tie the ends. Gently pull apart the straws to make a square.

Dip your custom-made tool into the bubble mixture and blow gently to make a giant bubble.

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This information has been adapted from Family Play Plans by TRUCE (Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment). A variety of materials are available on the TRUCE website (www.truceteachers.org) that will help parents and teachers counteract the negative impact of media and marketing on children and promote positive play activities.



MESSAGE IN A BACKPACK™

Bubbles

Family Play Plan

Bubble play is just plain fun. And it helps children cooperate, take turns, and solve problems.

Support your child's learning by talking about what's happening: "You blew a huge bubble," "The bubble floated away and popped," "You were very patient waiting for your turn." Ask simple questions: "Can you make it bigger?," "What is the wind doing to the bubbles?" Watch your child play to see what interests him. It'll also help you figure out what questions to ask to expand his learning.

Make your own bubble mixture or buy some. Use it with these bubble games.

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Bubble Games

Bubble relay

Use one plastic bubble wand and the bubble mixture. Family members stand in a line. The first person blows a bubble and passes the bubble and wand to the next person. (If the bubble pops, the child blows another bubble and passes it again.) Ask your child to predict how many times your family can pass the bubble without popping it.

Bubble tag

Use one plastic bubble wand and the bubble mixture. The person who's *it* uses them to tag others with bubbles instead of hands. Bubbles must land on another player to count. Play in a small space so children are able to tag others.

Bubble obstacle course

Make a start and a finish line and create a course using milk jugs. Have family members line up on either side of the course. The child who is *it* moves from start to finish dodging bubbles, trying not to let any bubbles touch him. First, one person blows bubbles. If the *it* child successfully reaches the finish line without a bubble touching him, then two people blow bubbles, then three, etc. The more bubbles, the harder it is to make it to the finish line.



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