

# COLLECTION OF PLAY ACTIVITIES

**A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR KINDERGARTEN  
TEACHERS AND SUPPORT SPECIALISTS  
SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT.**

## ARE YOU PLANNING TO PLAY WITH CHILDREN?

Before you begin, think through your goal. Do you want to support the child's individual development, or is your focus on group processes? Then think about whether the children currently need more activation and movement, or rather calming down and concentration.

Once the goal is clear, choose a suitable game from the collection and enjoy playing!



## WHY IS PLAY IMPORTANT?

Through play, children express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, organize their inner world, and process everyday events. At the same time, play is a safe, joyful, and natural way to learn new skills, practice relationships, and discover themselves and the world around them.

## THIS COLLECTION INCLUDES:

- Energizing Games
  - Attention and Movement Games
- Calming Games
  - Sensorimotor Games
- Group Games
  - Getting-to-Know-Each-Other Games
  - Cooperative Games
- Games That Develop Thinking Skills
- Memory Training Games
  - Games That Develop Attention and Impulse Control
- Creative Role-Play Games
- Children's Emotional Basic Needs in Play



# ENERGIZING GAMES

THESE GAMES ARE IDEAL WHEN CHILDREN NEED TO MOVE, REFOCUS THEIR ATTENTION, OR ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.

## ✓ Games with chairs

Aim: Attention, reaction speed, movement.

Equipment needed: Chairs.

### Musical Chairs

Description: Place the chairs in a circle so that there is one chair less than the number of players. Children move around the chairs while the music plays. When the music stops, everyone must quickly sit on a chair. The child who does not find a chair is out of the game. Remove one chair from the circle so that there continues to be one chair less than the number of children in play.

### Zombie

Description: Chairs are placed randomly around the room and the players sit on them. One chair is empty. One player is Zombie, who moves slowly towards the empty chair. The children's task is to change places quickly so that the zombie cannot sit on the empty chair. Once a player has stood up from their chair, he must find a new chair and may not sit back down on the same chair.

## ✓ Catching and chasing games

Aim: Attention, reaction speed, movement.

### Tail Tag

Description: Players have scarves or ribbons tucked into the waistband of their trousers as "tails", which others try to steal. A player who loses their tail is out of the game. The winner is the one who collects the most tails.

### Snatching Clothes Pegs

Description: Attach clothes pegs to the children's clothes. The aim of the game is to protect your own pegs while also trying to snatch pegs from others.

## ✓ Attention and movement games

Aim: Attention, reaction speed, self-regulation skills

### Fire-Water-Stone

Description: The game leader says different words and the players make the movement that matches the word.

For example:

Fire – jump onto a chair.

Water – crouch down.

Stone – freeze.

Whoever makes a mistake is out of the game.



# CALMING GAMES

USE THESE GAMES WHEN CHILDREN NEED TO SLOW DOWN OR NEED SUPPORT IN TRANSITIONING TO A NEW ACTIVITY.



## ✓ Teacher-led calming games

**Aim:** Regulation of activity level, self-control, calming down.

### **Quiet Elephant**

Description: Ask the children how a large herd of elephants might move. If necessary, show them that the whole group should move calmly but with heavy, stomping steps. Then ask how a silent herd of elephants might move. If necessary, model the movement. Once the children have understood this movement, you can close your eyes and let the children quietly sneak around you. As soon as you hear a sound, open your eyes and the “elephants” must freeze. End the game when you feel that the children have calmed down and are able to control their movement and sounds.

### **Calming Storm**

Description: The children move around the room according to the words spoken by the teacher.

For example: storm – heavy stomping steps; the storm is calming down – calm movement; the storm is over / sunshine – standing still and taking a deep breath.

## ✓ Sensorimotor games

**Aim:** Body awareness, safe touch, concentration.

### **Who Walked on My Back?**

Description: Use massage-like touches of different character and strength on the child’s back. For example: an elephant with a broad hand, a mouse with quick fingers, a cat with a soft touch, and so on.

### **Making Pizza**

Description: A calming back massage. Start by “rolling the dough” – you can use a soft toy and roll it along the child’s back so that the whole back is touched. Use different kinds of touch to cover the “pizza” with tomatoes, cheese and everything else the child would like.

### **Magic Blanket Touch**

Description: Children lie on the floor or in their beds. The teacher gently touches everyone with the “magic blanket” while saying calming and supportive words.

# GROUP GAMES

USE THESE GAMES WHEN THERE IS A NEW GROUP OR WHEN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE GROUP NEED SUPPORT.

## ✓ **Getting-to-know-each-other games**

**Aim:** Noticing different group members, expressing oneself in the group.

### **I Like... / Everyone Who...**

Participants sit in a circle. One player stands in the middle of the circle without a chair and says something they like, for example: "I like ice cream!" Everyone who likes ice cream must stand up and find a new place to sit. The player who does not get a chair says a new statement, for example: "I like dogs!"

You can also play it like this: "Everyone who is wearing something red!" or "Everyone who has a sister!"

### **The Place Next to Me Is Free!**

Children sit in a circle on the floor. One place is empty. The player sitting next to the empty place says, with the teacher's help if needed: "The place next to me is free. I wonder who would like to come here? Come, [child's name], move like a [animal]." The player chooses the child they would like to invite next to them and chooses an animal for them to move like.

For example: "Come, Tom, move like a dog."

## ✓ **Cooperation games**

**Aim:** Considering others, cooperation, resourcefulness.

### **The Lava Game**

Materials: Pillows, mats, rugs or chairs.

Description: The floor is "lava" and the children must move from point A to point B without touching the floor, using "islands" such as mats or pillows and passing them to each other.

### **Dragon-Knight-Princess**

A rock-paper-scissors type game.

Description: Divide the children into two groups. Each group decides together which role they will play. On a signal, they show the matching movement:

Dragon, raising hands and growling, beats the princess.

Princess, making a curtsy, beats the knight.

Knight, taking a sword-fighting pose, beats the dragon.

You can also use this game when the group finds it difficult to make decisions.



# GAMES DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

GAMES THAT SUPPORT COGNITIVE ABILITY AND HELP DEVELOP ATTENTION, MEMORY AND UNDERSTANDING.

## ✓ Memory training games

### What Is Different?

Description: One child goes outside the room and changes something about themselves, for example rolls up their sleeves or takes off one slipper. When they come back into the room, the other children must notice what has changed. This game has many variations. You can also choose 5–7 toys, give the children some time to memorise them, ask the children to close their eyes, and then remove one toy or replace it with another. The children must notice what changed.

### Let's Go on a Trip!

Description: The aim of the game is to "pack a suitcase". The first participant says: "I'm going on a trip and I'm taking..." for example, "a swimsuit". The next player adds something of their own and says: "I'm going on a trip and I'm taking a swimsuit and a tracksuit." In the same way, each participant adds something and always repeats the words of the previous players. You can adapt the game and play, for example: "I have a farm where there lives..." and name animals.

## ✓ Attention and impulse-control games

### Do Not Do What I Say, Do What I Do!

Description: The game leader says one action, for example "Touch your nose!", but shows something else, for example touches their ear. The children must do what the teacher shows.

### Hot and Cold

Description: Hide one small object in the room. As the seeker moves around the room trying to find the object, guide them with the words "cold" and "hot". Say "cold" when the seeker is far from the object and "hot" when the seeker moves closer to it.



# ROLE-PLAY GAMES FOR CREATIVITY

USE THESE GAMES WHEN YOU NOTICE THAT CHILDREN NEED PRACTICE IN TAKING ROLES AND EMBODYING CHARACTERS.



## Games developing creativity

### **Magic Forest**

Description: The game leader becomes a wizard and, with a clap, snap or another signal, turns all the children into suitable characters. For example: "Liirum, laarum, I turn you into frogs!" You can also turn players into characters expressing a specific emotion, such as an angry lion or a frightened mouse.

### **Guess Who I Am?**

Description: Use only body language and become an animal. The children's task is to guess who you are. If no one guesses, you can add the animal's characteristic sound. The first child to guess correctly gets to show the next animal.



## Create a space that invites role-play

### **Character Play Corner**

Description: Arrange one area of the group room so that it inspires children to create different worlds. Use fabrics, scarves and hats that can be used to build huts and nests and to embody different characters. Avoid ready-made costumes – creating the costume can be part of the play.

### **Toy-Free Day**

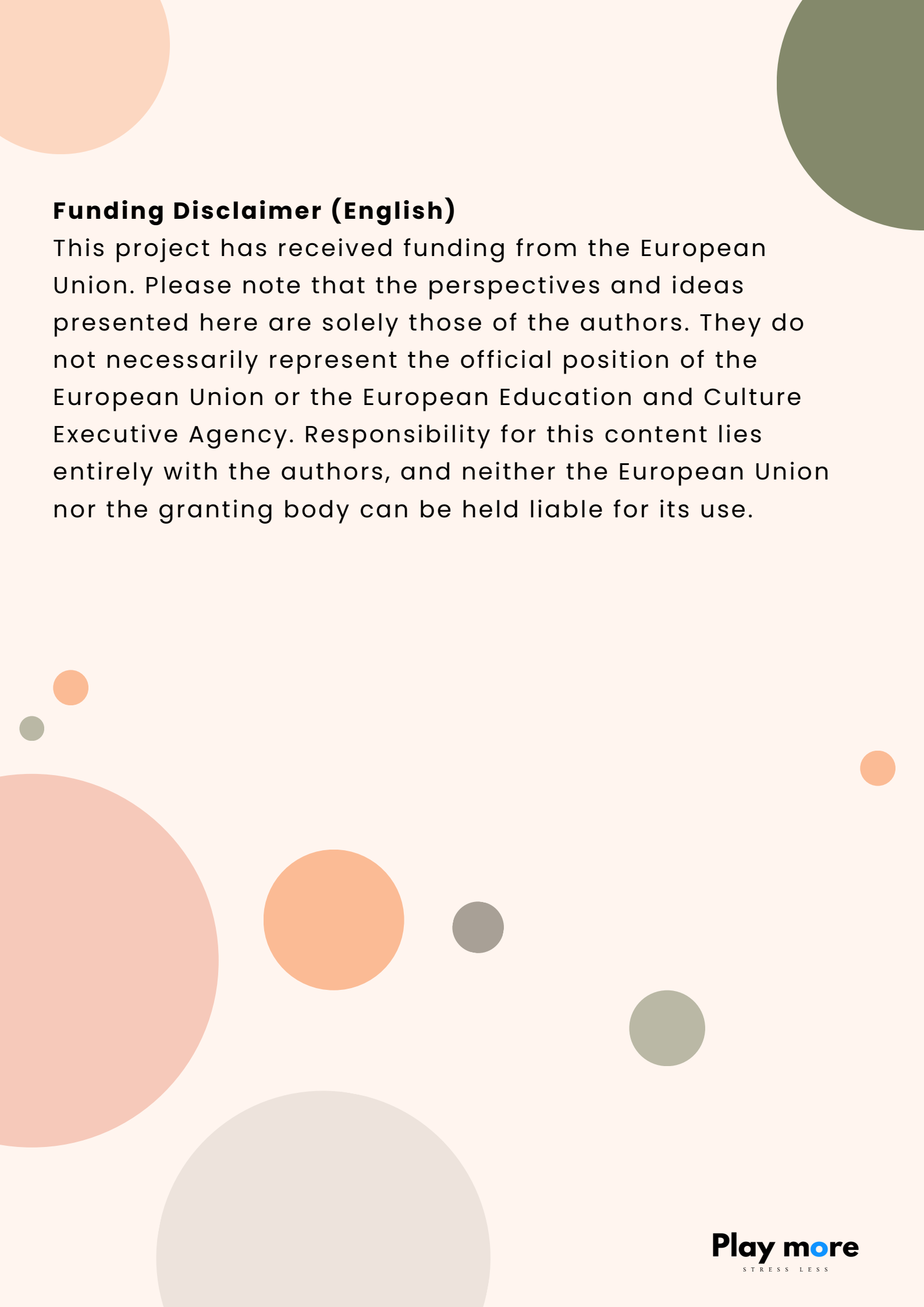
Description: To encourage free creative play, it is worth trying to arrange the group room without toys. Children could have access to fabrics, ribbons, scarves, pillows, chairs, cardboard and similar materials that they can use to make their own toys or create an environment suitable for play.



# EMOTIONAL BASIC NEEDS IN PLAY

Play is the child's most natural language for expressing emotions and making sense of the world. Especially in role-play, children's emotional basic needs become visible: attachment, self-worth, self-efficacy and joy. At the same time, role-play creates an opportunity to support these needs consciously by offering the child safe and corrective experiences in relationships with themselves and others.

| Child's Need                                                                                                               | Child's Role                                                                                                                               | Adult's Role                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Security and attachment<br>              | Animal (e.g., a kitten)<br>                              | Caring veterinarian or farmer<br>                     |
| Sense of capability / self-efficacy<br> | Rescuer, knight, or teacher<br>                         | Person who needs help<br>                            |
| Recognition and positive self-image<br> | Celebrity, princess, or superhero<br>                   | Reporter, photographer, king, or circus director<br> |
| Joy and creativity<br>                  | Safe play always creates space for self-expression.<br> |                                                                                                                                          |



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