



# Free and Guided Play

Providing a safe, engaging and autonomous learning environment for the children

**Leader Name** : Reeta Ryal

**Leader Designation:** Community Teaching Fellow

*Community Teaching Fellows are teachers from the community who lead exemplary classrooms and support educators in the schools.*

**School Name:** Government Primary School, Gular Dogi, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

**Location** : Gular Dogi Village, Tehri Garhwal, Uttarakhand, India

# Testimonial

*“We introduced free-play during the implementation of an Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum. Children love free-play, especially using clay, and wait for it. They often use clay to make things from their own experiences such as their house, things they like to eat and their friend’s house. While using clay they learnt how to make new things and children from nursery were also able to learn how to write ‘aksharas’ (letters/alphabets) using clay. I have noticed children never get bored during free-play and are always happy to be using clay in these spaces!”*

**- Reeta Ryal**  
**Community Teaching Fellow**



# The Challenge

A number of research studies\* show that children learn best through play.


However, creating an environment (in schools) which is conducive for play is a challenge for many reasons like lack of resources, fixed timetables, lack of awareness, lack of training on 'management' of play, a gap in mindset which inhibits the understanding of play as learning, etc. Therefore this minimises the opportunity for play for children, resulting in engaging in a way of teaching-learning which is not student-centric and does not enable strong learning outcomes.

[\\*https://learningthroughplay.com/explore-the-research/the-scientific-case-for-learning-through-play](https://learningthroughplay.com/explore-the-research/the-scientific-case-for-learning-through-play)






# What Changed?



Reeta created an opportunity for play in her classroom EVERYDAY for 30 mins. This was a mix of free and guided play.

Free play is when a child is free to explore and play on their own, with a resource or a peer.

- Guided play is when an adult is keenly observing children play and is asking them questions which is helping children make connections to their learning, come up with more ideas and extend their play.



Children in Reeta's classroom have been exploring multiple resources such as paint, blocks, clay, natural materials etc. and their properties to create different things and represent their thoughts and ideas. They have also started using clay as a way to practice letter recognition and writing (while working on their motor skills).



# Project Steps

## Before

- Identify a time of the day when it can be play time for the children.
- Ideally schedule this time for 30 minutes everyday.
- Identify any easily available resource that children can explore during play time for eg. empty carton boxes can be used instead of blocks.

## During

- Observe and guide by asking questions (to acknowledge the child's actions) such as:
  - a. "What are you making?"
  - b. "How did you do that?"
  - c. "What can you do to make this building taller?"
- You may also narrate what you observe to make the child aware of her/his learning, such as:
  - a. "I see that you have used 4 circles to show the rotis."
  - b. "You have used 5 yellow blocks in your house."
- The above two will also enable the child to build their vocabulary.
- Allow exploration with one material for at least a week. This gives the child an opportunity to extend their ideas with the same material.

## After

- To further engage children, the educator can ask children to present their creations to their peers at the end of the class.



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