

# Learning through Play Podcast Reflection Guide

## **Introduction**

Hello, this is your Learning through Play Reflection Guide that accompanies your Learning through Play podcast. This guide will help any pre-primary or primary teacher who wants to learn how to use playful learning in their classroom to track their reflections during the podcast!

## **Episode 1: What is Learning through Play?**

### **Play Memories**

What is your childhood play memory? Write down as many details as you can remember. Here are a few questions to help you:

- How old are you in this memory?
- Where are you?
- Who and what do you see?
- What do you hear and what do you smell?
- What is happening?
- What are you feeling?

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### **Defining Play**

How would you define the word “play”?

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### **What is Learning through Play?**

Now that you’ve listened to some other teachers, what would you say Learning through Play is?

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### **Play Matters**

Now think back to your playful memory. Why do you think you remember it so clearly after all these years? What makes it so special to you? What do you think this experience taught you?

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Now that you've listened to some other teachers, why would you say that Learning through Play is beneficial for your students?

### Spectrum of Play

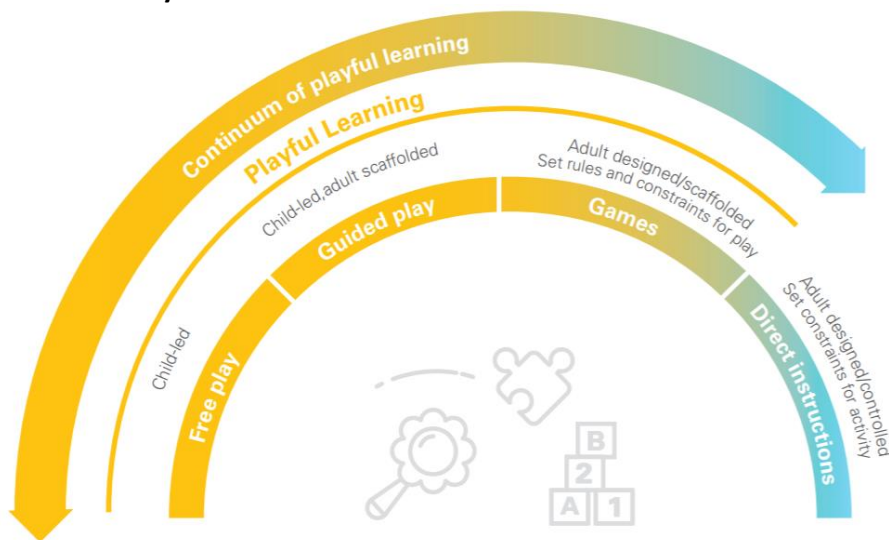
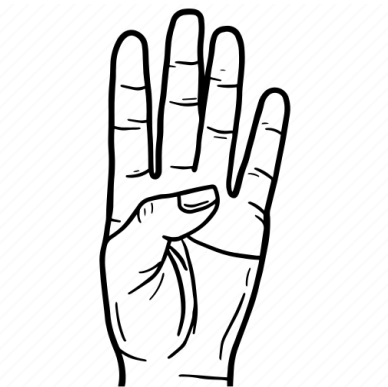


Figure 1: Learning through Play: Strengthening Learning through Play in Early Childhood Education Programmes; UNICEF, 2018

Look at the spectrum of playful learning above. Notice that Free Play, Guided Play, Games, and Direct Instruction are all part of the spectrum.

You can recreate this spectrum easily by using your left hand and folding down the thumb like the image below.



- **Free Play** – Free Play is an activity where children have the freedom to play, explore, and discover without an adult telling them what to do.
- **Guided Play** – Guided Play is where children decide what they want to do and an adult gives them suggestions.
- **Games** – Games are where children or adults design an activity that has rules or instructions for play.
- **Direct Instruction** – Direct Instruction is when an adult designs an activity and controls the environment with set rules about what can or cannot be done.

Listen to the classroom activity in episode 1. Circle what type of playful activity you think you heard.

- Free Play
- Guided Play
- Game
- Direct Instruction

Think about your playful memory. Circle what type of playful activity you think your memory is.

- Free Play
- Guided Play
- Game
- Direct Instruction

## Characteristics of Play

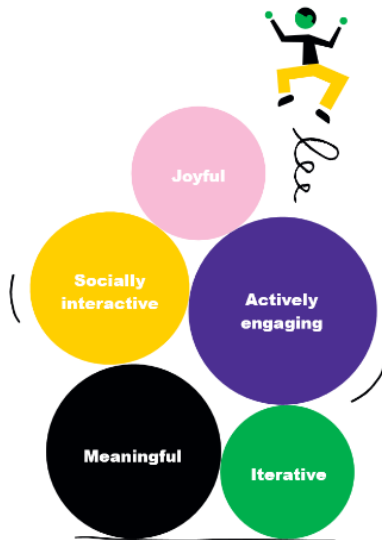


Figure 2: 5 Characteristics of Play, LEGO Foundation

Look at the 5 Characteristics of Play to the left. Notice that play is joyful, meaningful, actively engaging, iterative, and socially interactive- and each playful activity may have multiple Characteristics of Play in the same activity!

You can recreate this spectrum easily by using your right hand like the image below.



- **Joyful** – Joy is at the heart of play whether expressed as pleasure, enjoyment, motivation or thrill. From a child enjoying playing with a friend to the thrill of building that tower just right, joy is a key facet of play. Saying that Learning through Play must be joyful does not mean that there should be no negative or neutral emotions at all. Sometimes frustration with a problem is necessary to feel the joy of breakthrough when it is finally solved. Similarly, the power of surprise or the thrill of the unexpected can bring joy to an otherwise boring or even potentially intimidating situation.

- **Meaningful** – This is when the child can relate new experiences to something they already know. In play, children often explore what they have seen and done, or have noticed others do, as a way of grasping what it means. By doing so, they can express and expand their understanding through a variety of media, symbols and tools.

- **Actively Engaging** – Learning through Play also involves being actively engaged. When children are immersed in hands-on, minds-on play, they learn. Imagine a child who is absorbed in playing with a set of building blocks. She is actively imagining how the pieces will go together and is truly immersed. This mental engagement and resistance to distraction is a hallmark of both play and learning separately but seems to be especially powerful within the context of Learning through Play.

- **Iterative** – From a toddler trying different ways to build a tall tower with blocks, to a young child discovering that the angle of a slide impacts how far a marble will spin across a room, iteration – trying out possibilities, revising hypotheses and discovering the next question – leads to increased learning.
- **Socially Interactive** – Social interaction is a powerful tool for both learning and play. By communicating their thoughts, understanding others through direct interaction and sharing ideas, children are not only able to enjoy being with others, but also to build deeper understanding and more powerful relationships.

Listen to the next classroom activity in episode 1. Circle which characteristics of play you heard. You can select more than one.

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|---------------------|------------------------|
| ● Joyful            | ● Iterative            |
| ● Meaningful        | ● Socially Interactive |
| ● Actively Engaging |                        |

Think about your playful memory. Circle which characteristics of play you think your memory is. You can select more than one.

- |                     |                        |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| ● Joyful            | ● Iterative            |
| ● Meaningful        | ● Socially Interactive |
| ● Actively Engaging |                        |

## Country Episodes

### Part A

Listen to the classroom as the teacher introduces the activity the students will be doing. Draw what you heard. What does the classroom look like? What people and materials would you include?

From what you heard, what type of activity was this? What did the teacher do? What did the children do? What challenges, if any, did the teacher or children experience?

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Look at your left and right hands again. Remember that the 4 fingers on the left are for the 4 types of playful learning and the 5 fingers on the right are for the 5 characteristics of play. From what you heard in the activity, circle what type of playful activity you think you heard.

- Free Play
- Guided Play
- Game
- Direct Instruction

What characteristics of play did you hear? Circle which characteristics of play you heard. You can select more than one.

- Joyful
- Meaningful
- Actively Engaging
- Iterative
- Socially Interactive

## Part B

Think about your students: how old are they? What do your students do to play? What activities do you already know your students like? What challenges do you see in your classroom that you would like to address with playful activities?

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Listen to the teacher explain how they made this activity and what resources they used. Think about your own students and classroom. What materials could you use to recreate this activity for your classroom? What else would you need to adapt this activity so that it could meet the needs of your students?

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