Play in the Early Years

Play is crucial to the learning and development of children in the early years. Written by one of Australia’s leading early childhood academics, the third edition of Play in the Early Years is a comprehensive introduction to the theory and practice of play for children from birth to 8 years. Drawing on classical and contemporary theories, this text examines social, cultural and institutional approaches to play, and explores a range of strategies for successfully integrating play into early years settings and primary classrooms.

At the forefront of contemporary early childhood research, this edition features a new chapter on Conceptual PlayWorlds. This chapter demonstrates what Conceptual PlayWorlds look like to infants and toddlers, preschoolers, and children transitioning into school, and explores how Conceptual PlayWorlds can support cultural identities.

The text features classroom vignettes and photographs designed to help students connect theory to practice, and reflection questions and research activities to encourage in-depth reflection and extend learning. The integrated online resources include links to videos, readings and supplementary activities to further guide pre-service students in their learning.

Highly regarded by early childhood researchers and practitioners alike, Play in the Early Years remains an essential resource for pre-service students.

Marilyn Fleer is an Australian Research Council Kathleen Fitzpatrick Laureate Fellow, who holds the Foundation Chair of Early Childhood Education and Development in the Faculty of Education, Monash University. She is an Honorary Research Fellow, Faculty of Education, University of Oxford, a Second Professor, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences and an Honorary Professor at the Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark. She was awarded the 2019 Ashley Goldsworthy Award for outstanding leadership in university-business collaboration.
Cambridge University Press acknowledges the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present. Cambridge University Press is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledgements</th>
<th>viii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guide to online resources</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER 1 What is play?

- Introduction
- What is play?
- Play memories
- Intergenerational play memories
- Supporting school play
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements

## CHAPTER 2 Children's perspectives on play

- Introduction
- Understanding infants' and children's perspectives
- What children say about their play
- Creating the conditions for gaining the child's perspective
- Interpreting data on children's perspective
- Conclusion

## CHAPTER 3 Families at play

- Introduction
- Historical understanding of play
- Learning to play
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements

## CHAPTER 4 Digital play and digital tools to support learning

- Introduction
- Infants' and children's technological contexts
- Technological toys for supporting children's play
- Digitally amplified environments
- The program in action
- Conclusion
- Acknowledgements

## CHAPTER 5 Playing in schools

- Introduction
- How do we support play in schools?
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Australian Research Council, which has funded the foundational research that underpins this book through their Discovery Project Scheme and Laureate Fellowship Scheme. Translation of research is critical for the development of the next generation of teachers. This publication has been enriched by early childhood and primary teachers from around the world, who have generously shared their innovative practices. Specific mention of their contributions is made in each chapter. However, here I wish to acknowledge the professionalism of teachers and the amazing work they do each day for children and families, but also for their profession through the stories and engagement in research that underpins this book. I also wish to acknowledge the contributions made by Xingjie Wang, PhD scholarship holder in the Conceptual PlayLab, and to Rose Albiston, Academic Development Editor, Cambridge University Press for Australia and New Zealand and her colleagues for their ongoing encouragement and support in producing quality publications for pre-service and in-service teachers.

The author and Cambridge University Press would like to thank the following for permission to reproduce material in this book.

**ACARA content:** © Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2011 to present, unless otherwise indicated. This material was downloaded from the National Assessment Program website (www.nap.edu.au) (accessed 4 June 2020) and was not modified. The material is licensed under CC BY 4.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). ACARA does not endorse any product that uses ACARA material or make any representations as to the quality of such products. Any product that uses ACARA's material should not be taken to be affiliated with ACARA or have the sponsorship or approval of ACARA. It is up to each person to make their own assessment of the product.

**Early Years Learning Framework:** The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR 2009) is reproduced under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/au/) licence. The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website as is the full legal code for the CC BY 4.0 International (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode).

*Every effort has been made to trace and acknowledge copyright. The publisher apologises for any accidental infringement and welcomes information that would redress this situation.*
Guide to online resources

Additional online resources for *Play in the Early Years* are freely available online at www.cambridge.org/highereducation/isbn/9781108821148/resources. Visit the site to explore additional resources, videos and activities to expand on the content of the book.

This margin icon is used throughout the book to indicate that a link or activity relating to the content under discussion is available. The descriptor’s number can be used to help you easily identify the link in the chapter’s downloadable document.

Chapter 1  What is play?

**Video 1.1: Is play in decline?**
After reading about people’s play memories, watch the TEDx Talk ‘The Decline of Play’ by Peter Gray, and consider whether play is in decline.

**Link 1.1: What do people think about play?**
Read the article ‘Should We Just Let Them Play?’ by Rebecca English in *The Conversation* and follow the links. Should we just let children play? Do educators and families have a role?

**Link 1.2: Natural play materials**
Look up ‘natural materials’ on Pinterest or through another search engine. How might the materials you find there be used for supporting children’s play?