



FACT SHEET: About playgroup

A common scene at playgroup.

Children laugh as dad plays rough and tumble with a few toddlers. Parents chat as they exchange ideas over a cup of coffee. A grandmother cuddles a baby as she points to pictures in a book. A young mother pushes her child on the swing.

What is playgroup?

Playgroup is for children aged 0-6 years (depending on what age children start school in your state) and their parents or caregivers. It is different from child care, kindergarten and pre-school, because adults attend with their children.

More than 100,000 families attend playgroup each week in all parts of Australia at venues such as maternal and child health centres, kindergartens, halls, churches, community centres and primary schools.

Playgroups are as different as the people in them. Most are full of local families. Many are formed from a desire to meet families who have had similar experiences, e.g. they may be parenting a child with a disability, have adopted a child from another country, be fathers, or be Spanish speaking.

What children get from playgroup

Playgroup-aged children are going through a stage of rapid brain and skill development. At playgroup children can:

- Develop their cooperation skills through music, group singing, free play and snack time
- Develop verbal and non verbal communication skills with other children and adults
- Develop fine and gross motor skills
- Gain better body control, hand to eye coordination, spatial awareness and balance when they play with balls, sand, blocks, puzzles, play dough, paint and paste
- Discover shape, size, texture, quantity and consistency when they play with dough and clay
- Learn to recognise colours and express inner emotions by experimenting with paint, collage, chalk, crayons and stamps.
- Extend their experience of literacy in a social environment.

Why adults go to playgroup

Playgroups exist thanks to the parents, caregivers and extended family members who put aside a few hours a week to run a playgroup in their communities.

Playgroup can be a lifeline to parents with under school-age children who might not have any other opportunity to get to know local parents going through similar experiences.

We get feedback from lots of parents at Playgroup Australia. These are some of their reasons for attending playgroup.

- "Friendship."
- "The playgroup has been going for years and there's a good supply of toys, play equipment, books and a great outdoor area."
- "It's giving my child some stimulating experiences in a relaxed, informal setting."
- "It opens up the community to you. Before I went to playgroup I had no idea where the best places were to go locally for a good children's doctor or that you could go to the hall down the road for immunisations."
- "I want to meet people who've got children the same age as mine."
- "I'm not ready to hand over my child to someone else yet. I'd rather be there and be involved."
- "It's affordable."
- "I'm an army wife and we move around a bit. Playgroup is more like an extended family or support group to army families."
- "I feel comfortable with the other women at playgroup; it used to be a mother's group. I can say anything to them and still feel I'm okay."
- "I like getting out of the house each week away from the mess."
- "It's good to see how other parents solve problems with their children. We've only got one child but we'd like to have more. There's one woman at playgroup who's got four children. She's a good person to talk to sometimes."
- "This is my fourth child and playgroup is a special time each week I can spend just with her."
- "I'd like my child to get to know some kids he's likely to go to kinder with."

Find out more

If you have children under school-age and want to them to learn through play, find out more about playgroups and where they are located by calling **1800 171 882** or visit www.playgroupaustralia.com.au.