Characteristics of Play

• Intrinsically motivated, spontaneous
• Involves nonliteral, symbolic activity, creativity and imagination
• Actively engages children
• Takes many directions
• Process oriented

(Gestwicki, 2007)
Piaget’s Categories of Play

- Functional
- Symbolic
- Games with rules

(Gestwicki)
Functional Play

- Also called Sensorimotor or practice play
- Occurs at the age of birth-two
- E.g. child repeats same activity over and over
Symbolic Play

• Or representational play
• Age 2 and up
• Includes constructive play and dramatic play
• E.g. pretends to be a superhero, or uses a banana as a phone
Constructive Play

- Uses materials or objects to make things engaging
- Link between functional play and more sophisticated symbolic play
Dramatic Play

• Imaginary roles in which they pretend to be someone or something else
• Draws on first- or second-hand experience
• 2 or more children = sociodramatic play
• Representations can be more abstract than in constructive play
Games with Rules

• School-age children and beyond
• Depends on children's understanding and agreement to use rules
• Logical thinking and social controls and skills
• Sometimes games are informal or formally recognized, but abide by concrete rules
Parten’s Social Stages of Play

- Onlooker behavior
- Solitary play
- Parallel play
- Associative group play
- Cooperative play
Onlooker Behavior

- Child watches others at play.
- Child may be reluctant to join others or learns to play by watching others.
Solitary Play

• Plays alone, without any overt interaction with others
• Usually inexperienced and younger or older children who undertake complex pretend play or remove themselves from play with others.
Parallel Play

- Children share materials or play near each other without attempting to coordinate or connect their play.
- Children do not acknowledge the play of others.
- Precursor to group play

(Gestwicki)
Associate Group Play

• First kind of group play
• Type occurs when children are involved in similar activities near each other, perhaps sharing materials but not playing jointly (Gestwicki)
Cooperative Play

• Second form of group play
• Children negotiate play themes and roles with peers.
• Conversations establish the roles and events of the play.

(Gestwicki)
Piaget and Play

- **Assimilation**: takes in information and uses it for one’s own pleasure without adapting one’s thinking to it
- **Accommodation**: adapts current levels of thinking/schema to take in new info
- **Disequilibrium**: when new info does not match what is already known
- **Equilibrium**: reaches new level of learning when accommodating a new idea

(Gestwicki)
Piaget’s 3 Basic Kinds of Knowledge

- **Physical knowledge:** physical properties of objects
- **Logical-mathematical knowledge:** discovery of relationships between objects, people and ideas
- **Social knowledge:** learns expected behaviors of cultural and societal customs (Gestwicki)
Vygotsky

- Believed increasing complex mental activities of the child were derived from social and cultural contexts
- Social engagement and collaboration transforms children’s thinking
- **Zone of proximal development:** child’s actual developmental level of independent problem-solving and the potential developmental level given assistance (Gestwicki)
Vygotsky’s 2 Critical Features of Play

- All representational play creates an imaginary situation that permits the child to attain unrealizable desires. Coincides with when children are to learning the delay of gratification.

- Representational play contains rules for behavior that children must follow to engage in and complete the play scenario. Every fantasy activity follows social rules that develop during the course of the developing script. (Charlesworth)
Play Supports

• The ability to separate thought from actions and objects
• The capacity to renounce impulsive action in favor of deliberate and flexible self-regulatory activity

(Charlesworth)
Play and Cognitive Development

- Affects motivation
- Facilitates cognitive ability to comprehend several aspects (decentering)
- Supports the development of mental representations
- Fosters the development of deliberate behaviors
  (Gestwicki)
Play and Emotional Development

- Children become aware of their own and other’s feelings
- Take on the perspective of others
- Children can express and cope with their feelings
- Expression is safe and acceptable
- Come to understand their feelings in an intuitive sense and deal with them in concrete yet imaginary ways
- Real-world stress, pain, and fear can be diminished

(Gestwicki)
Play and Social Development

- Learn social skills through experience
- Provides context for taking on another perspective
- Taking turns, cooperating, sharing compromising are skills practiced in play
- Allows a place for children to test socially acceptable and unacceptable behavior

(Gestwicki)
Play and Physical Development

- Fine and gross motor skills are practiced
- Develop control of the body, running, climbing, and skipping
- Learn to judge distances
- Eye-hand coordination increases

(Gestwicki)
Play as developmentally appropriate curriculum

- Provides for all areas of a child’s development.
- Emphasizes learning as an active/interactive process
- Present highly motivated opportunities for learning.
- Allows for differences
- Contributes to brain development
- Is pleasurable
- Promotes acquisition of foundation skills

(Gestwicki)
Conditions that Support Play

- Physical environment
- Real-world experiences
- Teacher interventions
  - Helping plan and organize
  - Promoting new ideas
  - Model play behaviors
  - Provide props
Issues to Address Regarding Play

• Violent play
• Cultural influences
• Children with special needs