

How can I support my child during block play?

- Show interest in what your child is doing.
- Ask open-ended questions: "Tell me about your structure." "I wonder how big we can build this tower." "What kinds of animals live in your zoo?" "What does the rest of the town look like?"
- Ask your child how many blocks they have used so far and how many they plan to use. Count them together.
- Ask how many blocks they think it would take to build all the way to the wall.
- Talk about shapes of blocks. Name them and compare them.
- Build ramps and test them with cars and trucks.
- Talk about people who might live in the structure. What do they do and why do they live there?
- Ask what else could be added to the structure.
- Volunteer to write down the story of your child's structure using their words.
- Use your phone to take photos of what they build.
- Compare what they are building to buildings you have seen in real life.
- Have fun!



Find free block play events and more information at piercescountylibrary.org
search site: block play



BLOCK PLAY

Children **LOVE** building with blocks!



**Pierce County
Library System**

Information & Imagination

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3/15 (2M)

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Pierce County Library System

Learning happens during block play!

Having researched the benefits of block play, Pierce County Library System invested in sets of blocks for every library. The low-pile carpets and wide-open spaces create perfect places for building. We chose large wooden unit blocks that are satisfying to hold, relate perfectly to one another and are very durable.

What are children learning when they build with blocks?

Math

As children build, they count blocks, use them to measure distances, create patterns and name the shapes. These are math concepts young children need to learn.



Literacy

Children talk about what they are building using descriptive words. This develops their vocabulary. They see labels on the cabinet with block names, adding more vocabulary. Children may create signs for their building, practicing writing. We also add books to the block area for inspiration and even more literacy learning.

Science

Children explore the blocks' qualities: texture, size and smell. They use the blocks to explore balance, gravity and weight. When animals are added, children may build habitats and talk about them (more vocabulary).



Social Studies

With encouragement, children build what they see in the world. When people and neighborhood signs are added, children explore how people live and work. They build roads and neighborhoods, which is a young child's way of mapping.



Social Emotional Development

When children build together, they must give and take. If they build on their own near other children, they must learn to share the blocks. Cleaning up after play is a wonderful lesson in taking care of oneself.



Technology

Through block building, children explore stability, ramps, roads and bridges. They may add pulleys, levers, mirrors and tubes for additional experimentation.

Seven Stages of Block Play

All children move through the stages in this order. Once each stage is mastered, children move backward and forward through them. Ages two and up may skip the first carrying stage.

1. Carrying

Toddlers love to carry, move, touch, hold, drop and feel blocks, exploring their properties. They like a variety of containers in which to pack, repack and haul blocks.

2. Stacking

This involves both vertical (towers) and horizontal (roads) stacking.

3. Bridges

Children begin to use blocks to create bridges of all sorts.

4. Enclosures

These may be filled in with blocks—a 'sea' of blocks—or they may be open in the middle.

5. Patterns and Symmetry

Children become more sophisticated in their building, creating patterns or structures balanced on both sides.

6. Early Representational

Children begin to build structures to use them in play. For example, a child creates a zoo out of blocks to house animals they use for imaginary play.

7. Later Representational

This stage is generally reserved for older children. The structures that are built during this stage are often quite elaborate and sophisticated.

