

Rough-and-tumble play: What is it and why do children love it?

This is a favourite game for most children who love “play” fighting or the general rough-and-tumble play. This type of play allows the children to test their physical and social skills and take some safe risks that they can find as a challenge. These few facts and pieces of information will be able to help parents, and children, see the difference between aggressive “real” fighting compared to the rough-and-tumble pretend play.

Rough Play: What it looks like and the benefits for children

Rough-and-tumble play consists of climbing over one another, “play” fighting, wrestling, chasing, spinning, rolling around or challenging each other’s physical skills. Children mostly love this kind of play as it is fun and at the same time allows them to further develop skills needed such as:

- Establish working social relationships and personal boundaries through role playing and turn taking
 - Understanding each of their limits of strength
 - Spatial awareness and locomotive movements
- Having a clear idea of what other children will or will not let them do; enabling them to have a strong voice and be their own decision makers and build on communication skills
- Supports learning of skills such as cooperation, resolving conflicts on their own and regulating their own behaviours.

Concerns of “real” fighting

A lot of parents worry that their children are being involved in fighting that can harm one another, or being too aggressive with each other. The truth is that you can really see the difference between the two, and close educator supervision and interaction can keep rough-and-tumble play fun and engaging rather than aggressive and out of control.

During rough-and-tumble play, the children are showing signs of enjoyment such as laughing, smiling and pleased looks on their faces. Once they are done with this type of play they continue playing together happily.

If educators see any signs of real fighting such as anger, crying or loud voices we re-direct the play appropriately. We like to involve the children in decision making and rules about what is okay during rough-and-tumble play and what is not. As long as educators understand the value of this type of play and they can effectively manage and oversee this with the children but also share information with families who might be unsure of this aspect of play.

References:

Rough-and-tumble play: a guide (2016)

http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/rough_and_tumble_play.html

**Understanding the Value of Children's Rough-and-Tumble
Play (2008)**

<http://www.ecebc.ca/resources/journal/2008spring/03.html>

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