

Playgroups are a good way to give toddlers and pre-school children positive social and educational experiences. Playgroups also give parents an opportunity to interact with their child and observe their child's development compared to other children of the same age. Playgroups can be less formal meetings with neighborhood parents and children or more formal parent-child classes. The important thing is that parents find a place where they are comfortable with their child, have the opportunity to participate in activities or games to learn with their child, and have fun together.

### **Using Ready! Set! School! for Playgroups**

The activities of **Ready! Set! School!** can all be used with a group of children, whether in a playgroup or even a daycare scenario. In fact, these activities will help you have a focus and goal with each playgroup.

### **Creating Your Own Playgroup**

To create your own playgroup, here are some tips:

- Recruit parents who have children the same age or within 6 months of your child.
- Plan to meet weekly at a location that is safe and convenient for parents and children.
- Make a schedule of activities so that parents know what to bring to participate.
- Create playgroup rules so that parents know the expectations about attendance, what to do when their child is sick, what they have to bring to contribute, and what the focus of the playgroup will be.
  - Remember that there are lots of activities you can do with your playgroup that don't have to cost money or be extravagant but can offer children and parents opportunities to do things together.
  - Make sure that everyone is having fun!

### **Joining a Playgroup**

To join a playgroup, you might want to consider the following:

- **Location & Schedule:** Is the location convenient to my home? Does it meet the schedule of my child? Is it a safe and clean environment? Is it appropriate for babies and toddlers?
- **Age & Size of group:** Are the ages of other children in the group appropriate for my child (usually children should be within 6 months of each other). To be effective, playgroups usually

should not have more than 10 parent/child couples and often have less, depending on the location.

- Cost: Is there an enrollment fee? Is there a materials fee?
- Activities: Are there structured activities? Do the activities meet the interests of my child (music, art, physical activity, outdoors)? Are there materials I need to buy to participate in the activities? Are the activities appropriate for the age of my child?
- Playgroup Leader: Are parents going to rotate who takes charge each week? Are all parents active participants in their child's learning? Are the parents warm and caring and fun loving? Will you have a **Ready! Set! School!** lesson schedule?
- Responsibilities of Participants: Do I need to bring materials to participate? Are there assignments to bring refreshments? Am I expected to clean up?
- Playgroup Reputation: Are other parents happy with the experience of their child?

As you participate in the playgroup, be sure to evaluate its benefits for your child to make sure it was the right choice. Make sure you feel comfortable and that your child is engaged in the activities. Observe how your child interacts and develops. Overall, make sure you and your child are having fun. If you aren't, you may want to explore other playgroup options in order to find the right group for you.

## For Babies and Younger Children Ages 0 to 3

For babies and younger children ages 0 to 3, try the playgroup plans put together by [Welcome Baby](#)