

**Want to Play?**  
**Methods for Engagement and Learning for Young Children with Deaf-Blindness**

**By Tanni L. Anthony, PhD**

**What is Deaf-Blindness?** Deaf-blindness, or dual sensory impairment, refers to the concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and education problems that the individual cannot be accommodated in programs solely for individuals who are deaf or blind. (IDEA, 2014)

**Impact of Deaf-Blindness:** (a) sensory loss / range in type and degree; (b) presence of additional disabilities, and (c) probable challenges of sensory, social, physical, and cognitive access

What else do we know about our young children with deaf-blindness?

**What is Play?** Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood. (Fred Rogers)

**Types of Play**

Interpersonal	Exploratory / Sensorimotor
Functional / Relational	Constructive Play
Symbolic / Dramatic Play	Rough and Tumble Play
Games with Rules	

**Interpersonal Play:** Social / play interaction between infant and caregiver

**Exploration / Sensorimotor Play:** Play activities that are completed for the enjoyment of the sensory input gained from the task

**Functional Relational Play:** Building upon sensory exploration and simple manipulation of objects, the child begins to recognize the functional use of objects.

**Constructive Play:** Thinking before acting and inventing a solution to a play situation

**Symbolic / Dramatic Play:** Often called pretend play, dramatic play is a time when objects are used first as if they were something else.

**Rough and Tumble Play:** Initiating own physical activity for the sake of feeling body movements and as a way to participate in activity at the hands of another person or with other children

**Games with Rules:** Recognizing that some games have rules that have to be followed in order to play the game with others

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**Essential Elements of Play:**

1. Children make their own decisions.
2. Children are intrinsically motivated.
3. Children are immersed in the moment.
4. Play is spontaneous and not scripted.
5. Play is enjoyable.

**Play Works Both Ways: Assessment and Intervention**

**Key Strategies: Play Begins with the Letter P**

Preferences → Pathways → Presentations

- internal / external sensory abilities and needs
- likes
- enjoyment

Positioning / Proximity

- sensory needs / physical contact
- cognitive / spatial skills
- body needs for comfort / alignment / control
- reach range / ability to move
- interests supersede therapy
- material needs

Participation

- trust
- engagement
- turn taking
- reward

Pacing

- processing time
- response time

Predictability and Practice

- routines / sequence
- reactivity of environment
- opportunities for repetition

**Discussion and Problem Solving Time**