

Young children are skilled negotiators

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Young children are skilled negotiators when it comes to relationships and the content of play, reveals a thesis from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The thesis examines what [children](#) negotiate over, how they negotiate and the strategies they use. The results show that [young children](#) are skilled negotiators.

Torgeir Alvestad has looked into how young children learn, through play, which negotiation strategies are appropriate and which aren't.

Purpose of negotiations

Children use different strategies to agree during play. Through their choices, they learn how they can change what has been agreed for play.

The study looked at children aged two and three. In their [negotiations](#) they demonstrated invention, creativity, enthusiasm, industry, involvement, activity and problem-solving strategies.

The results show that children's negotiations form part of their play, and that these negotiations have a clear purpose: to agree on both how they can be together in their play and the content of their play.

Do not intervene

"A pedagogical consequence of the results is that adults shouldn't

intervene too early in children's negotiations," says Alvestad. "Just give the children time! Negotiations fit in well with the curriculum's talk of children's participation. The fact that children work towards the best solution also ties in well with the idea of [democracy](#) in preschool.

"What's more, [adults](#) shouldn't intervene thinking that there's a [conflict](#) between the children, as it is frequently a negotiation that's happening, which requires a different approach."

Agreement or disagreement

The results of the study show that young children's negotiations during play vary, depending on whether the negotiations originate in agreement or disagreement. In negotiations that stem from agreement - in other words the children are agreed that they will share their play - the play features efforts by the children to understand their friends' perspective as well as playful development of the imagination. However, negotiations arising from disagreement involve play that is more about power, domination and manipulation.

Provided by University of Gothenburg

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