

Four Easy Steps To A Happy And Healthy Play Date

(NAPSA)—In a world jam-packed with lessons and appointments, playtime is one of the simplest, most enjoyable pleasures in life for young children. It's important for kids to get together with their friends and it's a great way for them to develop important social skills that they'll use throughout their lives. Hosting a play date can be fun...and easy! Here are some tips from the Mott's for Tots Play Date Planner that will help you host a happy and healthy play date:

Tip 1: PLAN AHEAD. The best way to ensure your kids get the most from their experience is to plan ahead.

- **Make a Connection.** When picking a play date playmate, ask your children who they like to play with and why. For toddlers, ask moms with children around the same age as your own who you'd like to get to know better. After all, why should the kids get to have all the fun?

- **Be In the Know.** Do a little information gathering about the kids you're having over by asking their parents important questions about allergies and special rules they might have.

For example, does your child's playmate have any food or pet allergies? Are they allowed to watch TV or play video games? Offer information about your home and encourage them to ask questions, too.

- **Be Specific.** Earmark a start and end time. Schedule the first play date for an hour or two maximum. (You don't want the fun to fizzle because the tykes are getting tired!) And, if the kids are full of energy and having a blast, you can always let them play a little longer.



By planning ahead, parents can make sure that kids (and grown-ups) have a fun time during play dates.

Tip 2: KEEP THEM ENTERTAINED. Make sure your play date is fun for everyone.

- **Invite Parents In.** Invite the other parents in for coffee. This will help their children get more acclimated, feel secure and get comfy. Plus, it's a great excuse to get to know your new friends better.

- **Let Kids Rule.** The most important part of any play date is...playtime! Let your child decide the game plan and try to resist the temptation to be the play "director." If you see kids getting bored, just break out a few extra toys.

- **Limit TV.** Try to limit TV and video-game time. Play dates are a great excuse to get kids out

of the house and moving around.

- **Tip 3: PREPARE FOR A SNACK ATTACK.** Kids work up a big-time appetite when they play. And come to think of it, so do the parents.

- Serve a variety of healthy and kid-friendly snacks.

- Use cookie cutters on cheese slices or a paring knife on fruits and veggies to create fun and exciting shapes kids will love to eat.

- Offer an assortment of ready-to-drink beverages with little-to-no sugar such as Mott's for Tots juices or water.

Tip 4: MAKE GOOD-BYE EASY. Saying goodbye to friends can be hard for kids, especially when they're having a great time. Make the transition easier for them by keeping these three C's in mind:

- **Count Down.** For older kids, give them a "count down." Signal that the play date is coming to a close by giving them a heads-up 15 minutes before the end.

- **Clean Up.** As the play date winds down, have children straighten up their play area by putting away games and toys. This provides a cue to kids that the play date is wrapping up. Plus, it teaches teamwork and responsibility while reinforcing good habits.

- **Chat.** Before parting ways, ask the youngsters what they had the most fun doing. What did they like or dislike? Having kids share their experience brings closure to the play date. It also arms you with important information for planning your next one.

For full text of the Play Date Planner, visit www.Motts.com.