



The Little Grove
— LEARNING CO. —

UNDERSTANDING RISKY PLAY

*Why Challenge, Adventure & Uncertainty
Help Children Thrive*



A Family Guide from
THE LITTLE GROVE LEARNING CO.



NURTURING WONDER, CONNECTION & BELONGING
THROUGH NATURE-BASED LEARNING





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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RISKY PLAY?



*Exploring Challenge. Building Confidence.
Growing Capable Children.*

Risky play is any play experience that allows children to test their abilities, make decisions and experience manageable challenges in a supportive and nurturing environment.



RISKY PLAY IS:



- ✓ Climbing
- ✓ Balancing
- ✓ Exploring
- ✓ Using tools
- ✓ Testing limits
- ✓ Solving problems
- ✓ Taking age-appropriate risks
- ✓ Making choices
- ✓ Being physically active
- ✓ Trying something new

RISKY PLAY IS NOT:



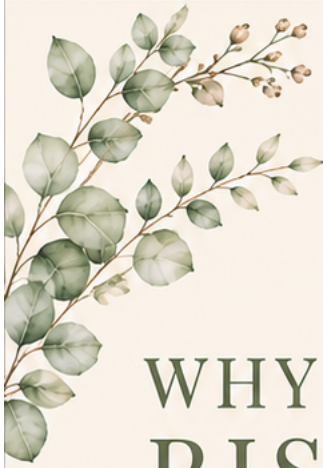
- ✗ Being unsafe
- ✗ Ignoring supervision
- ✗ Encouraging dangerous behaviour
- ✗ Forcing children beyond their comfort zone
- ✗ Putting children in situations they are not ready for
- ✗ Lack of boundaries
- ✗ Allowing unnecessary harm
- ✗ Risk without guidance

When children are given the space and support to navigate real challenges, they build **confidence**, **resilience** and a deep sense of **capability**.



Our role as adults is not to remove all risk, but to create environments where children can explore, test their limits and grow in safe, supportive ways.





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WHY RISKY PLAY MATTERS



The lifelong benefits of challenge, adventure and discovery.

When children are given opportunities to experience manageable risks, they build the skills they need for a healthy, confident and capable life.



CONFIDENCE



Children learn:
"I can do hard things."
They gain self-belief and trust in their own abilities.



RESILIENCE



Children learn:
"I can try again."
They develop persistence, determination and the strength to keep going.



RISK ASSESSMENT



Children learn:
"Is this safe enough?"
They learn to judge, evaluate and make decisions for themselves.



PROBLEM SOLVING



Children learn:
"What should I do next?"
They think critically, try ideas and find solutions.



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



Children build:

- Strength
- Coordination
- Balance
- Body awareness



EMOTIONAL REGULATION



Children learn to manage:

- Excitement
- Frustration
- Fear
- Big emotions

“ Children who are trusted to test their limits often become capable and thoughtful risk assessors. ”



WHAT RISKY PLAY LOOKS LIKE

Everyday opportunities that build skills, confidence and a love of challenge.



NATURE

- Climbing logs
- Balancing on rocks
- Walking uneven ground
- Exploring creeks and natural spaces



AT HOME

- Helping with cooking
- Using real tools with supervision
- Building, creating and constructing
- Climbing and playing on playground equipment



OUTDOORS

- Tree climbing
- Jumping from low heights
- Riding bikes and scooters
- Exploring new and unfamiliar environments



AT LITTLE GROVE

- Building shelters
- Using real tools
- Climbing and balancing
- Exploring independently
- Taking on challenges that grow skills and confidence



Risky play is all around us. It's not about seeking danger—it's about providing children with the time, space and trust to explore their world and discover what they are capable of.

Small risks today, strong humans tomorrow.





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SUPPORTING RISKY PLAY AT HOME



Practical ways families can encourage healthy risk taking every day.

Children thrive when they are trusted, supported and given space to explore their abilities. You don't need big adventures—small opportunities at home make a big difference.



1. PAUSE BEFORE HELPING



Before jumping in, take a breath and observe. Ask yourself, "Can they solve this themselves?" Giving children time and space shows them you believe in their ability to work it out.



2. TRUST THEIR CAPABILITY



Children are more capable than we often realise. Trust that they can handle more challenge than we might expect—and that struggle is part of their growth.



3. USE ENCOURAGING LANGUAGE



The way we speak shapes how children feel. Instead of "Be careful!", try: "What is your plan?" or "Where will you put your feet?" to support their thinking.



4. START SMALL



Risky play doesn't have to be big or extreme. A low log, a balancing beam, or a new height on the climbing frame can be enough to support challenge and growth.



5. FOCUS ON PROGRESS



Celebrate effort, courage and persistence, not perfection. Acknowledging their growth helps build confidence and a love of trying new things.



When children feel safe to take small risks, they gain the confidence they need to navigate bigger challenges in life.





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REFLECTION & FINAL MESSAGE

*Trust. Support. Space. Time.
The simple ingredients that help children grow.*



When children are given opportunities to test their limits in safe, supportive environments, they develop the skills, confidence and resilience to navigate life's challenges.

Risky play is not about pushing children to be brave—it's about trusting them, guiding them and believing in their ability to grow.

IN THE LITTLE MOMENTS...



- A climb up a tree
- A wobbly balance on a log
- A decision to try again
- A new challenge faced with courage
- A problem solved with determination

These are the moments that shape strong, capable and confident children.

At The Little Grove Learning Co., we believe childhood should be filled with wonder, discovery and meaningful challenge.

*Together, we can raise children who are empowered to explore,
think critically and trust in their own abilities.*



Thank you for being part of this important journey.

Let's continue to give children the roots to grow and the wings to soar.



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