

# Splashing and Singing: What can children learn from playing in the rain?

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Photo by Raven Ivory: [ravenivory.com](http://ravenivory.com) | Minneapolis

*Editor's Note: Weather is often a perceived barrier to outdoor play. It's easy to decide to stay inside when it's raining, snowing, or cold, but with the right gear and attitude, it's almost always worth it to get outside. The following is an excerpt from a forthcoming book, "Nature-based Learning for Every Preschool Setting: Start Small or Go Big" from Redleaf Press.*

## What can children learn from playing in the rain?

**The joy of nature.** One of our goals is to engender a joy of nature in children. Most children are drawn to puddles and when they are allowed to play in the rain they may form a deeper connection with nature. In an era dominated by screens and indoor activities, playing in the rain offers children a chance to connect with the natural world. It fosters an appreciation for the environment, nurturing a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world beyond their immediate surroundings. This connection with nature can cultivate a lifelong respect for the environment and its conservation.

**To navigate on slippery terrain.** We work to build good motor skills in children including balance. The experience of playing outdoors in the rain helps children learn to test slippery paths before stepping on

them, avoid deep puddles and take advantage of more shallow puddles, and keep their balance in different types of shoes.

**Learn through their senses.** You know that scent that tells you that rain is on its way? It provides a deep sense of pleasure for most of us. The sound of the rain against different surfaces, touch of raindrops of different sizes and frequency, the taste of rain dripping into your mouth are all opportunities to awaken the senses.

### **Creativity and Imagination:**

Rainy weather encourages children to think outside the box when it comes to play. The limitations posed by wet surroundings inspire creativity as they invent new games and activities that cater to the rain-soaked environment. From making mud pies to floating paper boats, children's imaginations flourish as they explore the possibilities presented by rain.

**Learn about rain through first-hand experience.** If the only water you experience comes from a hose or faucet, you don't know as much about water. Playing in the rain gives children an opportunity to learn about where the water we use comes from, that rain comes at different rates of intensity, wind affects the direction of rain, that water seeks its own level so puddles collect in holes and slanted ground, etc.

**Learn about properties of water and interaction with other parts of nature.** This includes how soil absorbs rain at different rates depending on its dryness and density, that plants that are exposed to rain grow in different ways, that sun exposure affects evaporation, that rocks do not absorb rain, etc.

**To use scientific equipment.** When children see a rain gauge filling up, they begin to understand it and other scientific tools more easily.

**A healthy respect for the power of nature and weather.** When children experience the difference between drizzling rain and torrential rain, they will make better decisions about what is safe. Trying to play with harder rain in their eyes helps them understand the concentration their adults need when driving in the rain or other adverse weather.

**Responsibility for belongings that get wet in the rain.** We want to provide many opportunities for children to grow in their independence and responsibility. Playing in the rain provides meaningful chores including moving items that can be ruined by rain to dry areas, placing rain gear to dry after play, and wiping spills from coming indoors after playing in the rain.

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