



The Art of the Invitation

30 QUICK AND SIMPLE ENGAGING INVITATIONS IN UNDER 60SEC

LETTER FROM

Jules

Invitations to play, often sound way more fancy and complicated than they really are.

To put it simply, it is essentially a way of offering activities and materials to children **in an inviting way**.

Because how the toy, activity or experience is presented... matters.

It determines whether children notice an activity in the first place.

It determines whether their interests are piqued and therefore whether they want to engage with a particular setup.

It determines whether they actually see the limitless possibilities of open-ended toys and whether their imaginations are sparked.

Now just a note that inviting does not mean you need an elaborate set up.

It's simply a way to entice them to engage in play, by either using a prompt that's related to their current interests, or setting up activities in a way that's new, interesting or in a way that they've never been exposed to before and leaving it for them to discover or chance upon which they often do.

It does not have to be fancy.

In fact, the simpler the better.

My goal with this resource is to equip you with some simple and easy-to-implement strategies when it comes to understanding the art of the invitation for getting children to engage in play, and to show you how it can look like in reality.

In 60 seconds or less :)



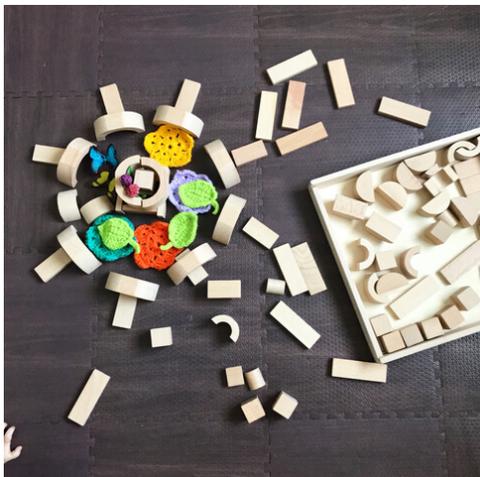
1/ STRIP IT BACK

I'm sure you know the saying "Less is more"

Children often derive the most fun from the process of creating their play from a simple prompt, rather than a fully decked out play scene that you have spent 20 minutes creating for them.

Keep the set up really simple and minimal with a scene that's rather open-ended to allow children to create their own storyline and add props to it as they wish.

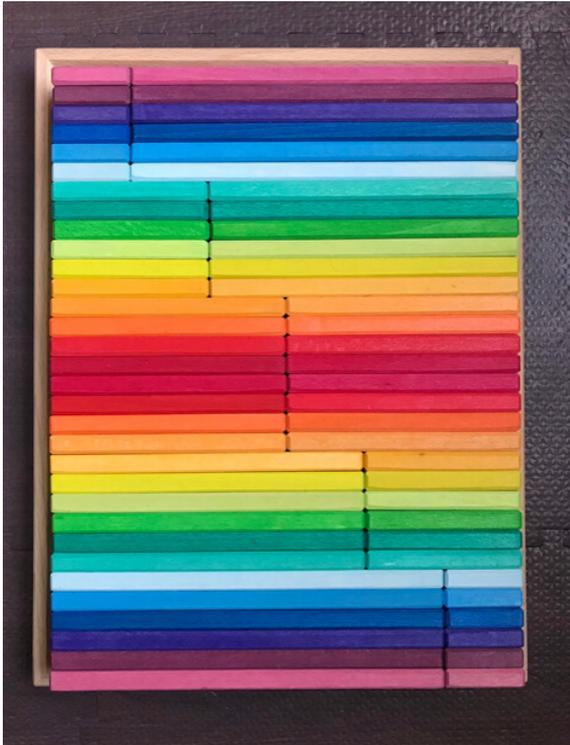
So for instance, in this picture on the top right you can see the really basic small world that I had set up in the background. It was nothing more than some playsilks as a backdrop and a few pieces of props which my child discovered with much excitement and then she proceeded to create the entire scene that you see on the right.



2/ BRING IT DOWN TO THEIR LEVEL

When I notice that an activity or a toy that's on the play shelf has not been touched in a while, before I rotate them out, I'll attempt to elicit some interest from my children by literally doing something as simple as taking the items off the playshelf and placing them on the mat, together with a couple of other toys like in this case, the tray of wooden blocks which ended up becoming this beautiful play on the left.

3/ TAKE IT OUT OF THE BOX



When we first got our beautiful Gluckskafer rainbow slats, I left it for two weeks as it is, in its original boxed tray without any prompts or invitations to see if it would inspire any play.

Gorgeous as it looked on its own, it didn't really inspire much engaged play so one morning, I decided to set up a really simple invitation to create/build/construct.

I took out every single block from the wooden tray these pieces originally came packaged in and placed them in a couple of baskets and flat dishes.

That's literally all I did.

With the empty tray looking like a clean canvas full of potential and possibilities, Miss 2 was drawn to it like a moth to a flame and created a maze-like road within the tray using the various pieces.



4/ SPLIT UP THE SET



One of the most iconic open-ended wooden toy on Instagram and Pinterest is the Grimms Rainbow.

And yet, one of the most common things I've heard one too many parents say is - "It is such an expensive toy to be constantly sitting up on the shelf. My child never plays with it/ reaches for it."

Just because it comes as a rainbow, doesn't mean that you have to present it as a rainbow.

Experiment with presenting it differently.

Remove a couple of pieces.

Offer just a few.

Stand it up.

Lay it down on its side.

Turn it upside-down.

Can you offer only pieces of a particular shape or colour perhaps?

When you are able to present it in a myriad of ways, children are encouraged to look at it from different perspectives and to see the limitless potential of this incredibly open-ended toy.

5/ MIX AND MATCH

The idea is to put different combinations of toys and activities together to inspire new types of play and new ways of looking at what the toys can be or do.

Children always using peg dolls together with magnetic tiles?

Present a basket of animals together with the magnetic tiles on another occasion.

Children always love playing with blocks?

Present the blocks together with some dollhouse furniture.

Children love playdough?

Add pegdolls, animals or duplo to a playdough invitation.

The combinations are endless!

Be sure to test out combinations that are unfamiliar so children are exposed to new ways of seeing their favourite toys.



BONUS TIP: A SURPRISE LOCATION

Can you set up a magnetic tile invitation next to the fridge?

Can you set up a simple small world invitation on top of the TV cabinet?

Can you set up a favourite toy out on the balcony or in the yard?

Don't underestimate the element of surprise and the idea of something out of the norm! :)

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FINAL MESSAGE

One final note, please NEVER associate a child's disinterest with a particular activity you set up as a failed activity or take it personally in any way.

Take everything you observe as information to inform future setups and experiences. It's all a case of trial and error and practice makes perfect.

Just keep at it, try different things and have fun in the process :)

And remember, you can't get this wrong! There is no right way of doing this!

With that said, here's 30 more quick and simple setups to inspire you and get your creative juices flowing! Enjoy!

This is where the *fun* stuff happens





Time spent *playing* with children
is never wasted



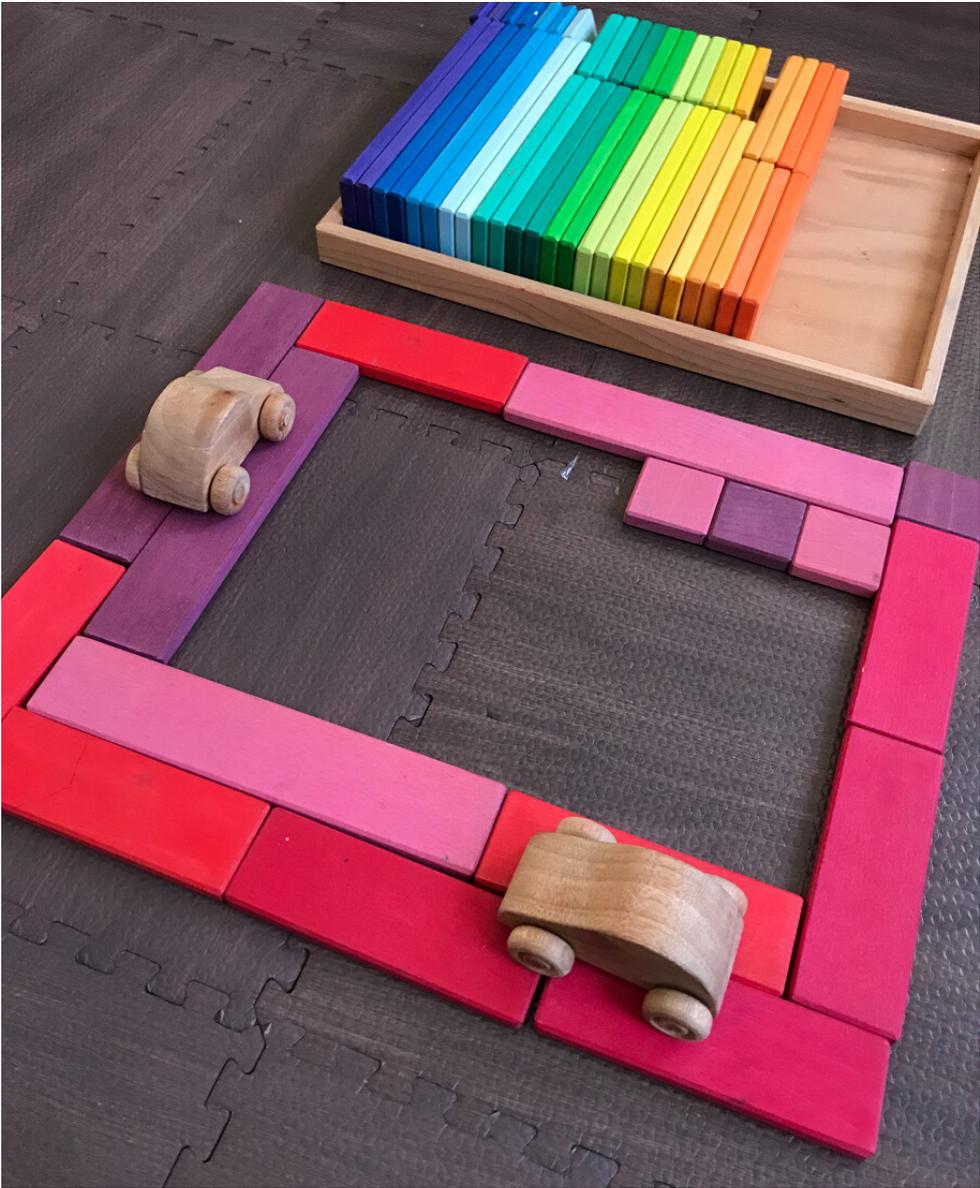
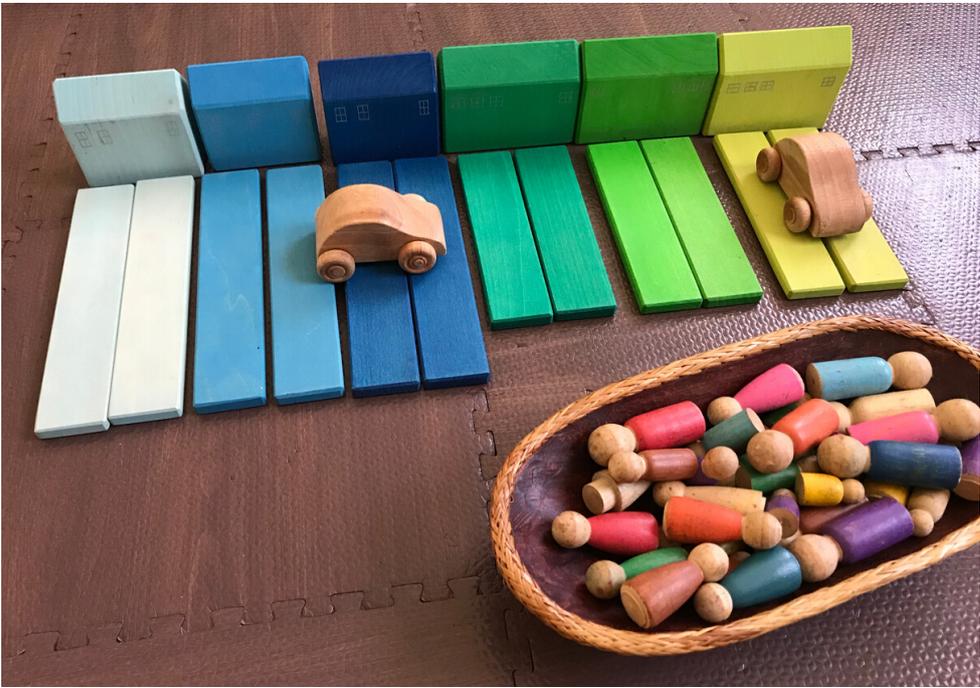


Play is our brains *favourite* way of learning

- Diane Ackerman







Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.

- Mr. Rogers







Play

builds the kind of free-and easy, try-it-out, do-it-yourself character that our future needs.

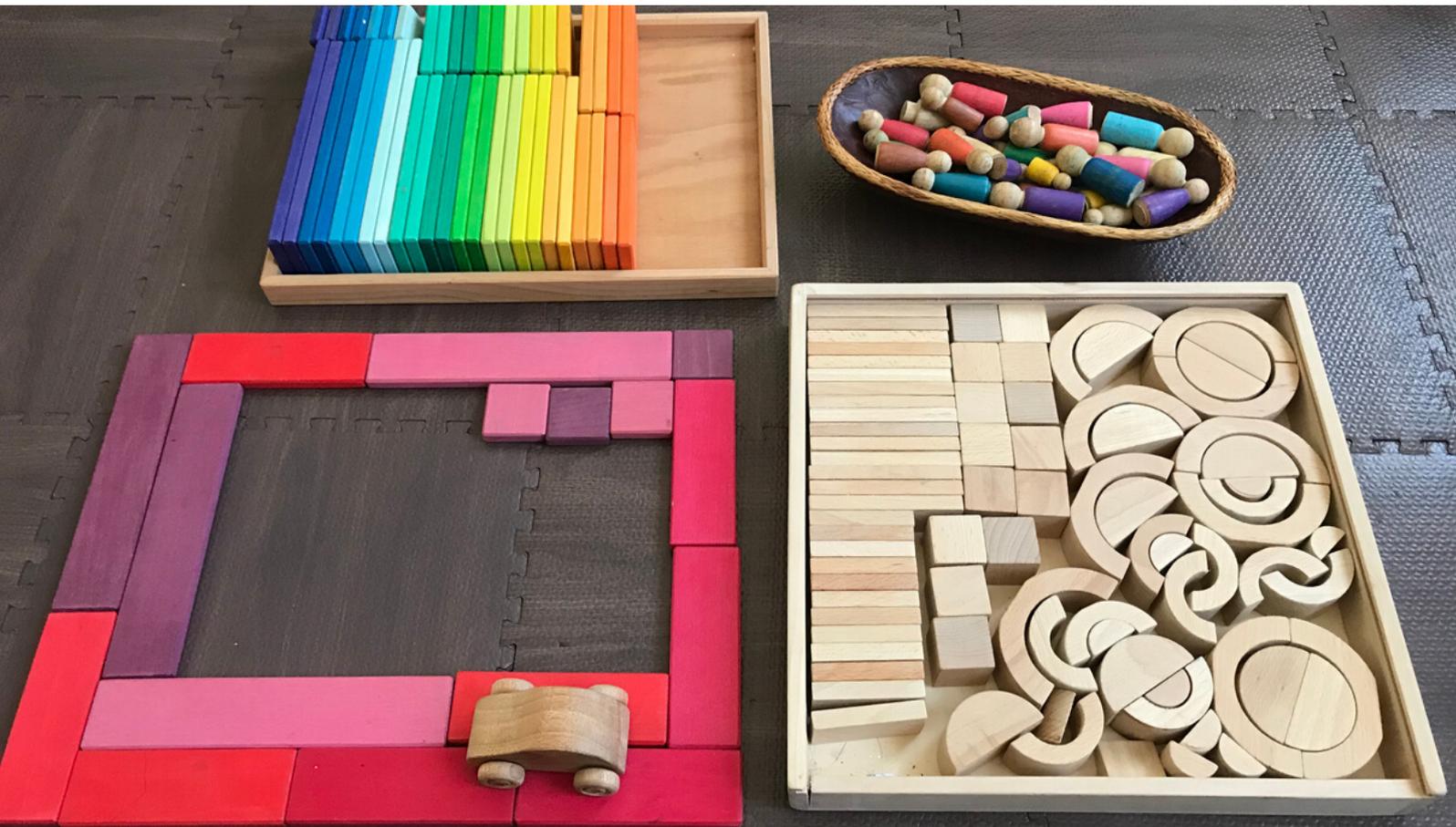
- James L Hymes Jr





Play

is worth investing in









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