



Raising Playful Tots

Mums Making the Most of **Play Time**



# Auditing and evaluating your child's play

January is the typical time to be reflective and make plans for the New Year. Before the end of January we've forgotten them or realized this is just not going to work. Plans and goal setting is easily done ANYTIME of the year.

I'm a big fan of Dave Ramsey's envelope system and he along with others shares the best way to effectively set & **achieve** goals.

**1. Be specific.**

When setting goals, be specific in what you want to achieve. Vagueness will only cause you to feel overwhelmed, and you will just give up.

**2. Make your goals measurable.**

In order to know if you achieved the goal, it must be measurable. For example, if you want to lose weight, don't simply write down "lose weight" as a goal. How much weight do you want to lose? Or don't just write "spend more time with family." How much time do you want to spend with your family every night?

**3. Are they your goals?**

Only you can set your own goals. If your spouse, co-worker or friend sets a goal for you, you're not going to achieve it. Taking ownership will give you more incentive to meet your goal.

**4. Set a time limit.**

Setting a time frame will help you set realistic goals. For example, if you want to save more money, list how much money a month you want to put into your savings account.

**5. Put them in writing.**

Putting your goals in writing will make you much more likely to achieve them. Write down your goals and review them often. This will give you motivation to make them a reality.

This is the process to succeed. Successful people reassess their lives and then start living intentionally, in writing, on paper, on purpose. Make your resolutions a reality in this year!

Source: The Keys To Achieving Your Goals in 2010

Let's get started on the play evaluation so that this year you reach the goals you want for your children.

**\*\*Feel free to print for your own personal use or forward to friends. \*\***

Best wishes and playful times,

Melitsa Avila  
Raising Playful Tots.com

## Looking back and reflecting

This is the time of year we reflect on what's gone on **before** and **make plans for the future**. We audit our lives. Whilst you're there making plans for a great year consider including a **play audit** for your children.

*Tip: Try introducing some of these questions during your family dinner as discussion questions.*

- What type of play did you encourage? Should you encourage?
  
- What opportunities did they have for
  - a) Creative play?                      b) Outdoor play?
  
  - c) Unstructured play?                d) unplugged play?
  
- What did we love doing together?
  
- Have we experienced some new things together?
  
- What do we want to do more of?
  
- How are we managing the exposure and use of multimedia and portable devices in our home
  - a) as parents ?                      b) for the children?
  
- What didn't work well for our family?

- Are there activities I want to try?
- How's our family balance of activities?
- Are they doing age appropriate activities?
- What books, blogs, articles, podcasts, magazines, courses, people, friends, places or conferences impacted me (or our family) the most about play?
- What do we, as a family, regularly do to stay grounded; positive and connected with our children?
- How are we planning and encouraging our children to be independent and successful without us?
- Do we have reasonable limits and expectations set for this year, which are different than last year for our changing family?

## After your audit what's your plan?

1. Share your ideas with others. Blog about it. Talk to your spouse, if you haven't already done the audit together.
2. Discuss and come up with a plan of SMART<sup>1</sup> goal(s).
3. Where will you put your resolutions so they are visible?
4. How do you make these things happen: set up systems of success to practically have the resources to help you achieve your goals? software :: Calendar:: Journals:: ebooks :: Create a [Pinterest](#) board :: Join a group :: become involved ::delurk ::podcasts :: and many more.....
5. Tweet about it, journal it, Share on Facebook or Google+?
6. When will you revisit and evaluate the goals to keep you on track a) monthly, b) after 6 months c) end of year d) annually e) other?
7. Whatever you decide whether to go public or stay private with your resolutions celebrate all the great things you have done and look to the potential of what you can try to do.

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<sup>1</sup> Specific **M**easurable **A**ttainable **R**ealistic **T**imely

## Looking forward and planning

January is a time for reflection and goal setting. All across the country people are thinking of goals for the New Year. One overlooked area in goal setting and planning is often, “What play **will we encourage** this year?”

I don't think many of us give enough thought to our children's play habits. We're very tuned in to what food we put in front of our children and what they see, listen and participate in.

We know that the tub of blueberries is a good choice for them, but if they don't or won't eat it we evaluate that it's too expensive to keep buying blueberries, only to have them thrown away. We might try a kiwi instead and find that they like the furry skin. We then become kiwi eaters. Can we say the same diligence about play?

The way we play has changed in many ways since you and I were children. There are more toys, and some for the better. With more toys there are many more choices and more chances to get it wrong. What a responsibility!

The millions of dollars spent on packaging and marketing toys makes it hard and really difficult to determine if the toy is actually a good choice for my child.

The fact that many toy manufactures now give out advice about how to play can further complicate matters. Doctors and early childhood experts are featured on panels designed to help guide us.

Who do I listen to?

Dr X on the back of the toy packet?

Professor Y who writes books about play or is a journalist?

My friend Tara who's a research assistant with a play foundation?

My aunt who swears by Lincoln Logs?

With so many choices, it is easy to end up with rooms full of toys and not know why you bought some of them, or even why do you keep them?

So, how do you go about evaluating your child's play so that **YOU** make the choices in your home?

## What's next?

1. **Complete** the audit
2. **Reflect** on your successes. We all have them.
3. **Identify** something you wish to work on.
4. **Define it** using the steps 1-5 in the introduction.
5. **Limit your play goals**. You are likely to find many things you'd like to work on but choose wisely. You can't do it all right now. Play is just one aspect of your family life.
6. Start **today!**

The last step is often overlooked. **Be accountable**. If other people know your goals then they can ask you how you're doing, celebrate and chivy you along when you need it.

I would love to help you be more accountable. Feel free to email your goals and steps to me. If you're happy for public accountability then comment via the blogs, [Facebook](#) or [Google+](#).

Look forward to hearing from you and wish you and your family every success in your play times this year.

For more ideas on how to ramp up your play today with your child.  
Go to [Play Activities](#) for the weekly newsletter of play activities and ideas for the under 5 child.

[Play Activities Blog](#) for articles, activities and chit chat about play.

[Raising Playful Tots](#) for the weekly Internet radio show podcast of interviews with likeminded play people who share that play is important to the under 5s.

[Treasure Basket Play](#) for beginner play ideas for the under 12 months little ones.

[Play Activities for Newbie Players](#) Baby and young toddler play activities

[Everyday Sensory alphabet activities](#) Older toddler, preschool and up

[Raising Playful Tots Index](#)- Top 100 play activity blogs to inspire and encourage your play journey this year.