



Playdates Parent Handbook 2023 -2024 Session Celebrating 30 Years!

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Dear Playdates Families,

Welcome to Playdates **30th** School Year Session! Built on the passion for early childhood education, trust and family, I am ever grateful for the Playdates community. Honored to work together with so many loving Playdates families and dedicated staff, I can't imagine a more rewarding and enjoyable career. Your trust, and support with our mission to nurture social, confident and kind children, is what makes the the Playdates program so special, and sets us apart. The Playdates staff team and I can't wait to meet your children and kick off an amazing year together, starting the week of **September 18th**.

Please review the contents of this handbook carefully. It is important that you are aware of the policies, health and safety requirements, and guidelines. Please adhere to the policies and procedures, as it is vital to the success and well-being of our Playdates families and beyond. For the healthiest and most enjoyable experience, we appreciate your open communication, patience and flexibility.

We look forward to discussing the program policies set forth in this handbook, and are happy to answer questions during the parent orientation meeting on **September 7th**. Throughout the session, please contact me or your staff team without hesitation, if you have any questions, concerns or suggestions.

Let the wonder and discovery begin!

Cheers to 30 Years!

With gratitude,
Maureen



Mission

Playdates Mission: To foster social, confident, independent and compassionate children in a pressure free, natural home environment.

History

Thirty years ago, when a popular Darien, Connecticut playschool program closed unexpectedly, parents encouraged Maureen Bloom to continue teaching their two year olds in their homes. Maureen created the unique model for **Playdates**, Fairfield County's innovative at-home, socialization program for children 18-36 months of age. Playdates play groups are led by nurturing, experienced, and trained staff . The groups meet at the participants' homes on a rotating basis.

2023 -2024 School Year Session

Dates: September 18th, 2023 – May 16th, 2023

Days: Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday or Thursday, older 2's group

Time: 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.

*The class time for the first 2 weeks of the session will be modified to 1.5 hour duration to insure a natural progression to the full morning routine and ease the first drop off transition for the children.

* **September 18th – September 28th : Class time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.**

* **October 2nd - Full morning begins: Class time – 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m**

PARENT/TEACHER ORIENTATION MEETING (in person)

Meeting Date: Thursday, September 7th

Time: 9:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Location: Darien Community Association, 274 Middlesex Rd., Darien.

Agenda: Staff introductions, home visits scheduled, review of the Parent Handbook outlining the Policies and Procedures, followed by a Q & A.

Home Visits

Your staff team will schedule home visits to meet you and your child during the week of September 11th. They will view the play areas inside and outside for safety, activity planning and logistics. Please plan on a 15 – 20 minute visit.

Curriculum

Every child is uniquely and wonderfully different. The child-centered curriculum is directed by the children's inclinations and abilities. Designed to be fun, creative and spontaneous, the seasonal and sensory rich, developmentally appropriate activities build skills in all areas including fine motor, self-help, visual motor and social emotional. The pressure free, natural environment encourages a child's confidence, self-esteem and mutual respect for individual differences.

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDELINES

1. Following the American Academy of Pediatrics vaccination schedule, all children are required to be fully up to date with their required childhood vaccinations. No Exemptions will be permitted.
2. Children are required to bring their own labeled water thermos or Sippy cup.

Weather Related Cancellations

- Playdates follows the Darien Public Schools for weather related cancellations and delayed openings. There are no make-up days or reimbursements for cancellations.

ALLERGIES

- If your child has any allergies or dietary restrictions, we appreciate you providing the teachers and class families a short list of healthy snack options for your child.
- If your child will be bringing an Epi-Pen in their back pack to Playdates, please alert the staff.

Drop Off/Pick Up Safety Procedures:

Drop -Off:

- Please Park safely with consideration of neighbor's property.
- Prior to the first host date, the host will provide parking and logistics to the entrance of the home and as well as directions to the playroom.
- Locate your child's labeled, color foam "cubby" mat. Place backpack on the mat to keep your child's belongings organized and separated from the other children's mats.
- Your teachers will be eagerly awaiting your arrival in the playroom.
- The staff will quickly engage your child in an activity. This is time for a reassuring kiss and hug good bye. Please do not linger or leave without saying good-bye.
- If your child experienced difficulty with the drop off transition, the staff will call you.

PICK-UP:

- If you need to pick up early, please make arrangements with the staff in advance.
- If running late for pick up please call the staff's cell phone with your ETA. A teacher will reassure and stay with your child until you arrive.
- If someone other than yourself is picking up your child, please inform the teachers at drop off. No child will be permitted to leave without being secured in a car seat.
- **Playdates staff are not allowed to transport any child.**

Student Illness Policy:

- **Attendance:** Please text your staff if your child will be absent.
- If your child, you or anyone in your household is sick, please stay home. If your child or a family member is ill with a cold, flu, fever, respiratory or any covid-19 related symptoms, please keep your child home from Playdates for 24 hours after their symptoms subside. If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness, rash and/or virus, please alert your staff at your earliest convenience. A Doctor's note is required prior to returning to Playdates.

Disciplinary Policy

Our Staff incorporate positive language and feedback with direct modeling to ensure understanding and success. At Playdates, discipline is presented in a positive manner. Inappropriate behavior is discouraged in ways that help to prevent the development of a negative self-image. We insist that no child be allowed to harm another child. We use positive reinforcement, redirection, and set clear limits with consistency. Children will be treated with dignity and respect at all times.

Items to Bring:

- Please clearly **label EVERYTHING** with your child's name.
- Dress your child in play clothes and outdoor shoes/boots/hats.
- Apply sunscreen at home. Staff is not authorized to apply sunscreen.
- Pack a Backpack/tote bag with a change of clothes, diapers, wipes and **labeled water** thermos or Sippy cup.
- Please pack a special stuffed animal, blanket or transition object (pacifier) to comfort your child in the event of separation anxiety.
- Please do NOT bring food or toys from home.

Host Reminders:

- Make your designated indoor and outdoor play areas as safe and tidy as possible. Put away any potential dangers and choking hazards.
- Cover your furniture with a protective sheet if concerned with stains.
- Provide a low table with at least four chairs for crafts and snacks.
- Pets: Keep pets away from the play area. If you have a dog, clean up the outside play area prior to hosting.

Scheduling Changes:

If you are scheduled to host and your child is ill, send a group email/text ASAP, soliciting a sub host. Contact the teachers and they will assist you with the securing a substitute host if needed. All moms/caregivers are required to "reply all" to confirm the host location change.

- Check your texts/emails before leaving your house, in the event of a last minute host change or another important message.

Greeting and Helping with the Group:

- Greet the teachers and parents when they arrive. If possible, assist directing parents to the entrance to the play area.

Emergency Procedures:

The Playdates Staff will take whatever steps necessary to obtain emergency medical care if warranted. The steps may include but are not limited to the following:

- Administer CPR and First Aid.
- Attempt to contact a parent or guardian.
- Attempt to contact you through any person listed on the emergency contact form.

If we cannot contact you or your emergency contacts, we will call an ambulance and have the child taken to the hospital emergency room in the company of a staff member. The Playdates' Director and Teachers will not be responsible for anything that may happen as a result of false or lack of written information given at the time of enrollment. Any expenses incurred above will be paid by the child's family.



About the Director and Teaching Teams

Maureen Bloom: Playdates, LLC Founder/ Director

Education: BS in Education, Northeastern University, Boston, MA

A native of Massachusetts, Maureen was a Teacher and Educational Program Coordinator prior to moving to Darien, Ct., where she and her husband raised their 3 sons. Maureen's passion is early childhood education. When a popular Darien playschool where Maureen was teaching closed, the parents asked Maureen to continue teaching the class in their homes. Thus, Playdates, the innovative and acclaimed at-home socialization program, was born.

Maureen brings energy and a positive attitude to everything she does. Maureen is a sports enthusiast and enjoys volunteering in the community as well as supporting numerous charitable organizations. She can not imagine a more rewarding and enjoyable career and is honored to work together with so many loving Playdates families and staff nurturing social, confident and kind children.

The Playdates Staff Team: An impressive collection of highly educated women from varied professions have a genuine enthusiasm for young children and learning. The Playdates Staff Team hold bachelor degrees and advanced degrees from colleges and universities throughout the country. They bring a wealth of wisdom, maturity, and first-hand experience; understanding the importance of Social and Emotional learning from raising their own children. The staff is certified in infant and child CPR and First Aid. Please visit the Playdates website for detailed teacher information. We can't wait for you to meet your child's teachers in person!

Playdates continued success and highly regarded programming is credited to the partnership and trust between the parents, teachers, and children. Parents are naturally a child's first and most important teacher. Understanding this, the Playdates teaching staff views their responsibilities to you and your child as a privilege and honor.

Notes

