The Development of Play Age by Age

Here's a look at how children's play progresses from playing side by side to playing interactively.

0 to 2
- like to look at other babies.
- love the company of other children.
- laugh at the antics of siblings.
- join in activities which are centered around them.
- engage in parallel play, offering toys but not playing together with other children.

2 to 3
- begin to play with other children.
- enjoy simple games.
- squabble and fight with others.
- not share toys and can become possessive and uncooperative.
- increasingly converse with other children.
- still not be able to play with others if they have had little social experience.

3 to 4
- play more complex and interesting games.
- form stronger friendships.
- tease and taunt siblings.
- make and break friendships easily.
- copy other children.
- not switch easily between pretend and reality.

4 to 6
- firm up friendships as they reach school age.
- become more independent, not all doing the same thing at the same time.
- take on separate roles in complex games.
- explain games to other children.
- describe other children as “best friends.”
- indicate to others when to “pretend” and when something is “real.”