Children go through various stages of block play as they work through the learning of one stage they are ready to move on to the next stage of play. Watch how your child plays with blocks and see if he or she matches one of the stages below. As skills advance, it is typical for children to combine several stages. The stages are developmental—each one building on the last—but children advance at their own rate regardless of their age.

**STAGES OF BLOCK PLAY**

1. **DISCOVERING BLOCKS**
   A child will explore individual blocks and their physical qualities by carrying, pushing, pulling, feeling, tasting, building and dropping them.
   For more discovery, offer an assortment of block types and simple containers.

2. **STACKING BLOCKS**
   A child will stack 2 or 3 blocks. Children can stack them vertically or place them in a horizontal line. Beginning block builders often use a combination of stacking.
   For more discovery, try a small assortment of the same type of blocks.

3. **COMPLEX STACKING**
   A child will combine vertical and horizontal stacks to create more complex patterns. A child may stack vertically and horizontally to make a 3-dimensional structure with no interior space.
   For more discovery, try providing pattern cards.

4. **MAKING ENCLOSURES**
   A child will make enclosures flat on the floor. A child begins to name the construction while building or when it is completed.
   For more discovery, offer toy farm animals, people, and cars.

5. **CREATING BRIDGES OR ARCHES**
   A child will place a block that spans the space between two supporting blocks.
   For more discovery, offer pictures of famous bridges or a piece of cardboard and lines.

6. **COMBINING ENCLOSURES & BRIDGES**
   A child will make more complex buildings and use them as settings for dramatic play. They also begin to share ideas and build cooperatively with others.
   For more discovery, try supplying blank paper and pencils to make signs, photographs of famous buildings, and roofing materials.

7. **BUILDING WITH PATTERNS & SYMMETRY**
   A child will plan structures that have patterns and symmetry with details such as ramps and doors. They may do this cooperatively with other children.
   For more discovery, give children color cubes or planks and photographs of famous paintings.

8. **BUILDING BLOCK STRUCTURES THAT REPRESENT OBJECTS FOR PRETEND PLAY**
   A child will plan and create structures in blocks and use them in role play situations. Buildings are often kept standing for several days.
   For more discovery, try providing measuring tools, home building magazines, and dress-up clothes.