Puzzle play involves thinking out problems and using hands and fingers for coordination. Puzzle play is usually done alone, but can be done in cooperation with others.
Te Whāriki
Puzzle play supports learning across all strands of Te Whāriki. In particular, puzzles support the Communication strand as children experience the symbols of their culture including that of numbers and other mathematical concepts. Through the Exploration strand children develop working theories about spatial understanding and they learn strategies for active exploration, thinking and reasoning.

Puzzle play can help children to
• develop hand–eye coordination
• develop finger and hand muscles
• learn to solve problems
• learn to reason and deal with frustration
• learn to persevere and be patient.

Adults can support children by
• keeping the puzzle area tidy and organised
• allowing them to do the puzzles at their own pace
• taking an interest but not taking over
• accepting that they will make mistakes and letting them know that it’s okay
• suggesting different ways of doing things
• talking to them about what they are doing.

Providing for puzzles
Children can work on the floor or at a low table. Display puzzles well and make sure they are in easy reach of the children.

Ideas for puzzles
There needs to be a good range of puzzles for children of all ages and interests including:
• one piece to multi-piece
• from simple to difficult to challenging
• showing a range of subjects and patterns.