

There are many different behavioural elements and patterns in play behaviour. A play sequence may include elements which are unique for play and also elements which are similar to movements from other behavioural contexts such as predation, aggressive behaviour or sexual behaviour. One group of the play-unique elements are play signals.

Play signals are highly ritualized movements or gestures and animals use them for communicating their playful intentions to their play partners. These actions can be used in the beginning of a play bout for initiation of social play, or during the play bout when they are used to maintain social play in situations when the play could be interrupted by patterns from serious behaviour or could be broken off.

Many scientists started to focus their research on play behaviour and play signals in the past fifty years. However, there is still lack of sequence analysis of play of particular species. More of such analysis could bring out new interesting findings.