



# Early Years Library

A compilation of evidence-informed skills and practices to support children's cognitive and social-emotional development



# Early Years Library

## SERIES INTRODUCTION: LANGUAGE AND EARLY LITERACY

**Language and early literacy skills help children understand others and express themselves through reading and writing. Language and early literacy skills can be supported by children's regular engagement in, and enjoyment of, shared reading, mark making, social conversation and language-rich play.**

Early childhood education plays an important role in embedding these early literacy skills into children's environments and daily routines. Meaningful and contextualised activities intended to develop literacy skills show children that the written word has significance and keeps them engaged and excited.

Young children develop an understanding that reading and writing are ways to communicate and make meaning. As children progress on their journey towards reading and writing, they begin to identify sounds and letters, write part or all of their name or read simple words. Later, more advanced reading and writing skills allow children to express themselves in interesting ways and to understand and communicate information across subjects in school.

Children may develop these skills in different orders or at a different pace to others. Practitioners can use their knowledge of each child, their setting and the wider community to tailor their practice.

The Early Years Library contains four language and early literacy booklets, each covering a core language and early literacy skill and key practices that can be used to support skill development. The table on the next page presents the four booklets.

If you want to support:	Focus on:
Language and listening	Learning new words Using new words in context Listening and responding Remembering stories Answering questions about a story
Phonological awareness	Identifying a word's first and last sounds Recognising rhyming sounds by listening Producing rhyming sounds and words Syllable awareness Oral segmenting (from words to sounds) Oral blending (from sounds to words)
Print and letter knowledge	Identifying letters of the alphabet Identifying lower case and upper case letters Understanding that print conveys meaning Understanding print as a system
Early writing	Mark making for meaning Forming letters Writing your name

For more information on the Early Years Library and to download the booklets, visit [www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary](http://www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary)

## How can I use these booklets?

The booklets can be used very flexibly and for different purposes:

- During new staff induction, to help new staff understand why they focus on certain skills and activities.
- When planning activities for the children based on your understanding of their interests, needs and the curriculum in your setting. Practices and strategies can be adapted to your context, to children's age, and to your daily schedule.
- Throughout the day to get inspiring ideas for extending activities, responding to children and planning in the moment.

As a practitioner, you might find that you are already using many of these strategies and practices. This can give you the confidence that the work you are doing to support the children in your care is underpinned by evidence.

## Commonly used strategies

Evidence-based programmes recommend a range of strategies for practitioners. Throughout the Early Years Library, you will notice that some of these strategies are used more frequently to support some skills, while other strategies are used more frequently to support other skills. For instance, visual tools such as posters and printed materials are frequently used to help children identify a word's first and last sounds, while open-ended questions are frequently used to support children use new words in context. Using a range of strategies is most likely to support young children's development. At times, as a practitioner you will also step back and let children experience challenge and joy in their learning without getting involved.

Strategies to support early numeracy skills include:

- Didactic instruction and teacher modelling
- Discussion, questions and answers
- Visual displays, objects and materials
- Books, songs and nursery rhymes
- Games, role-play and child modelling
- Repeating sounds, syllables or words
- Drawing and writing
- Art and creative projects
- Strategy practice and physical learning
- Timetabled routines

## Inspiring ideas

To support each of the skills, the Early Years Library offers inspiring ideas based on typical activities in evidence-based programmes. There are a range of activities suitable for individual, small group, and whole group activities. Some of the inspiring ideas are appropriate for in-the-moment interactions with children, while others require more planning. They are meant to inspire your practice, not dictate it. You can use the inspiring ideas to reflect on your practice, discuss ideas with colleagues and plan how to respond to children's interests and needs in relation to your curriculum.







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### Unique individuals

Research shows that each child develops in a unique way, rather than following a strictly linear pre-defined route through development in a specific order or timeframe. For this reason, the Early Years Library is not presented in chronological order by age. Practitioners can use their professional judgement to gauge which skills a child may benefit from focusing on at different times.

### Inter-connected areas of development

While the booklets are presented separately, research shows that all areas of development are inter-connected. Supporting children’s language and early literacy skills will call on social and emotional skills; social and emotional skills will support early numeracy skills, and so on. The Early Years Library is designed to be flexible, allowing you to combine practices from across the booklets and return to the booklets in different ways at different times.



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## Role of the adult in supporting child development

Early childhood education can help children build strong foundation skills in language and early literacy skills. When children have plenty of opportunities to explore and practise language and early literacy skills, they can apply the skills they learn to new problems and activities in their everyday life.

Practitioners can support children to develop these skills in a range of ways, for example by establishing routines, introducing strategies and physical learning, or modelling language use. Striking a balance between child-led and adult-guided experiences helps children develop their love of learning while also supporting and extending their learning. The Early Years Library highlights specific effective practices from evidence-based programmes that you can weave into your existing approaches.

### Are you using the Early Years Library?

We'd love to hear from you. Scan the code or visit [bit.ly/contact-eyl](https://bit.ly/contact-eyl)



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# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Language and Early Literacy** Series

## LANGUAGE AND LISTENING

What do we  
mean by  
language and  
listening?

Developing the ability to listen, understand and respond appropriately and learning and using new and interesting words in context are important foundational skills for the development of language and literacy. Children learn to listen carefully to, understand and remember verbal information and stories. Children demonstrate their listening skills by responding to spoken instructions, answering questions about what has happened in a familiar story or talking about what might happen next. Children hear a wide variety of words in context and are given the opportunities to expand and use new vocabulary in play and conversation.

Why is it  
important

When children are exposed to, and practise new words in context they develop the confidence and skill to communicate in a variety of ways, and understand the many ways that others communicate, including through reading and writing. Listening and understanding skills also help to develop children's reading fluency, increasing their enjoyment and understanding of books and stories and demonstrating that words can communicate meaning. Being able to understand the parts of a story can give children a foundation on which to develop their own story-telling skills as they grow.

### Learning new words

Children learn new words when they are exposed to them in context and can link the word's meaning to their existing knowledge. Starting with simpler descriptive words and expanding to longer, more complex vocabulary, children begin to understand, remember and practise new and interesting words.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use new words in context, emphasising and repeating them in other contexts to help to build children's understanding
- Talk to children about new and interesting words that you encounter or overhear, explaining their meaning. Encourage children to use the words in activities and their own conversations
- Use visual tools such as picture cards or props that help children to understand the meaning of new words

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Where does this belong? Using a variety of small world toys, discuss and introduce new words after using familiar words to describe the place each animal lives. Ask children to sort the toys by their habitat. *"Where does the polar bear belong? Oh, it lives in the cold and ice! Polar bears live in a place called the Arctic, that's a snowy habitat! What is a camel's habitat?"*
- Teddy wants to go for a walk round the garden! Support children to plan the walk for Teddy. *"Does Teddy want to walk under the magnolia tree? Jump on the stepping stones? Hide behind the large slide?"*
- Discuss with children the parts of plants found in the garden or grown from seeds using new and interesting words, pointing out the roots and stem, and asking children what plants need to grow. *"Yes! Water and sunshine help plants to grow. Plants need lots of good nutrients from the soil, too."* To help children to develop an understanding of the meaning of new words, use them again in a different context. *"We need to eat food with lots of nutrients to help us to grow!"*

#### Tip

Use lots of new and interesting descriptive words in conversations with children. When children hear words used in different contexts, it can help them to build a meaning for each new word.

#### Tip

To help children generate or recall words, teachers can offer prompts for either the sound of the word (phonological support; e.g. "nu..." to prompt nutrient) or the meaning of the word (semantic support). Allow children the time to remember, rather than just telling them.



### Using new words in context

Children learn to use their new vocabulary in the right context with increasing confidence. In structured and unstructured activities, children recall and use new and interesting words to communicate with others independently.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Support children to use new vocabulary by using new words yourself, for example during a role play activity, and extend children's own contributions
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage children to use the new words they have heard
- Use visual tools such as props, dressing-up resources and arts and crafts materials to encourage the use of new words
- Use role play scenarios and games to encourage children to talk to each other using new vocabulary

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Teddy's visit! Ask children to show Teddy around, describing the important things they can see. When the tour has finished, have the children phone Teddy's daddy and tell him all about Teddy's day! Support children to use and repeat the new words they have heard. *"Teddy got stuck in the oozy mud in the garden and had to be rescued!"*
- After reading a familiar book, support children to role play the story, prompting them to use interesting new words and repeated refrains. *"Do you remember what the troll says? 'WHO'S THAT TRIP-TRAPPING OVER MY BRIDGE?!' That's right!"*
- Shopping mystery! Ask children to describe what they want to buy to the shopkeeper without saying its name! Support children by asking: *"Is it round or square? Does it feel soft or rough?"* Prompt each child to use these new words to help the shopkeeper to figure out what their customer wants to buy.

#### Tip

Extend children's vocabulary by repeating back what they have said, adding one new descriptive word. *"You're digging a hole? Yes, you're digging a deep hole!"*



### Listening and responding

Children practise their listening skills by responding to information that they hear, for instance by listening to spoken instructions or different words or sounds. They respond in different ways, for example, through verbal or physical responses.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Remind children of strategies to help them listen carefully
- Give children developmentally appropriate instructions and ask questions for children to listen and respond to
- Use visual tools such as natural resources and arts and crafts materials during listening and responding activities
- During listening and responding activities, use visual tools and everyday objects such as puppets, toy animals, garden materials (e.g. sticks, leaves, or sand), and flashcards to engage children

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When playing outside, or on a walk, ask children about the noises they can hear in the environment. *“I think I’ve just heard a loud, rumbling noise! Can anyone else hear that? What could that noise be? You can hear a whistling sound? Me too! Where is it coming from?”*
- Hop little bunnies! When singing ‘hop little bunnies’ remind children to listen carefully and wait until they hear you sing the word ‘hop’ before they jump up and start to dance!
- Tic in the dark! Outside on a wintry evening or in a room where furniture can be pushed to one side, turn off the lights or ask one child to close their eyes. Have the other children make funny noises or repeat their own names and have the child who is ‘it’ find them by sound alone!

### Remembering stories

Children remember important parts of stories and put key events from stories in order.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- When reading books with children, show how you recall key events from the story
- Discuss and ask children questions about what has happened within a story
- Using role play and small world play, support children to act out familiar stories in order

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Let's Talk! Before the story begins, remind children to listen very carefully because at the end you will need help to remember what happened. *"What did the caterpillar eat? Can you remember what animal it turned into at the end?"*
- Pick a familiar fairy tale to read to children. When the story is finished, support children to organise a role play game that re-enacts the story, gently encouraging children to remember key events and repeated refrains. *"So where would you stand? What does the wolf say now? 'LITTLE PIG, LITTLE PIG LET ME COME IN' And what do the pigs reply? 'NOT BY THE HAIRS ON MY CHINNY-CHIN-CHIN!'"*
- After reading a book, spread picture cards which show key events from the story on a table or whiteboard. Ask children to put the cards in order: *"Can you find the first part of the story? And then what happened? You can put that card right at the end if that's how the story finishes."*

#### Tip

When reading familiar stories, ask children if they can remember what happens in the story just from the cover page.

### Answering questions about a story

Children answer questions about a story, for example, making predictions about what might happen next or responding to questions about characters.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Ask children questions and have discussions while reading
- Read stories to children and give your own opinions about the book

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Let's Talk! *"What was your favourite part of the story? I really liked it when... Has that ever happened to you? How would you feel if you had to do that?"*
- Predict the Plot! In the middle of an exciting, unfamiliar story, ask children what they think might happen next. Encourage children to talk to each other about their predictions. *"Does everyone agree?"*
- When reading a non-fiction book, support children to talk to about something they found interesting. *"Bears eat moths? I didn't know that!"*

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Language and Early Literacy** Series

## PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

What do we  
mean by  
phonological  
awareness?

Children develop the ability to hear the differences between sounds in language and use these sounds creatively to produce words. Recognising sounds, syllables, and rhymes lays a foundation for children to produce their own rhymes and blend and segment sounds to compose words.

Why is it  
important

Phonological awareness is foundational in reading and writing. Teaching children how to recognise sounds and syllables in words and how to orally blend and segment sounds is an early building block for learning how to read.

### Identifying a word's first and last sounds

Children begin to distinguish the first sounds in words, recognising when two words share the same first sound, and producing new words that begin with a particular sound. When confident in recognising the first sounds in words, children can learn how to distinguish the last sound.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to split words up into their first and last sounds and explain how you identify those sounds
- Give children lots of opportunities to talk about words' first sounds
- Use visual tools such as posters and printed materials to reinforce the idea of first and last sounds
- Repeat sounds and split words into their first and last sounds throughout the day

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Oh no! The animals can only eat food that begins with the same first sound as their name! Help the zookeepers find chocolate for chimps, sausages for snakes and eggs for elephants!
- Support children to make piles of objects beginning with the same sound. Draw the letters on paper to label the piles as they create them: *"You've brought a rrrr-abbit! And you've brought a rrrr-ed crayon! They both start with r!"*
- I spy! Use both the first and last sounds in words in games of I spy: *"I spy with my little eye something beginning with 'ch'... Chair! That's right! I spy with my little eye a colour ending with 'ed'... Red! You got it!"*

#### Tip

Children find it easier to recognise the first sound in words, start there and progress to words' last sounds.



## Recognising rhyming sounds by listening

Children become familiar with the concept of rhyming and learn to identify when sounds and words rhyme by listening to words read aloud in activities, songs, poems and games. Being able to hear when something rhymes is the first step to children becoming more familiar with different groups of words (e.g. words ending in *-ing*) and becoming more confident at telling when words rhyme, and when they don't.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children which words rhyme by emphasising and talking about words that rhyme
- Discuss why and when words rhyme, and when they don't, and ask children to identify rhymes
- Repeat sounds, syllables or words to help children become familiar with different rhyming words and sounds
- Use books, poems, songs and nursery rhymes to give children lots of opportunities to listen to rhyming words
- Use games and role play activities to support children to listen to and repeat rhymes

### Inspiring Ideas

- Point out the rhyming words in a familiar nursery rhyme, pausing to let children fill in the rhyming word if they can. *"Twinkle twinkle little star, how I wonder what you...are! 'Star' and 'are' sound the same, they rhyme. Up above the world so high, like a diamond in the...sky! That's the rhyme! You are rhyming experts!"*
- Have a mischievous puppet or teddy read a poem or sing a song with rhyming words in it, while children join in. Teddy says a funny, made-up word in the place of a familiar rhyme!
- Fill a bucket with pairs of toys that rhyme like a cake and a snake or a fox and a box. Have the children take turns to pick an object until everyone has something. *"Oh you've picked the clock! And your friend has picked the s...ock! That's right, they rhyme! That means the end of the words sounds the same. Who else can find a pair that rhymes?"*

#### Tip

Show children that their mouths make the same shape when they are saying words that rhyme.

#### Tip

As children become more familiar with recognising rhyming sounds by listening, showing them rhyming words in print can further support their learning.

### Producing rhyming sounds and words

As children develop skill and confidence in recognising rhymes, activities progress to support children in being able to come up with their own rhyming sounds and phrases.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss and ask children questions about rhyming words and phrases and prompt them to come up with their own rhymes
- Show children how to make up their own rhymes by brainstorming potential rhyming words
- Repeat lots of rhyming sounds, syllables and words throughout activities and discussions
- Use pictures from books and tools in your setting to encourage children to think of rhyming words

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Your name sounds the same! Support children to swap the first letter or sound of their name to make a funny rhyming name – *“Lily, you look ch-illy!”* – encouraging them to think of lots of rhyming nonsense words once they are more confident.
- Using a story with lots of rhymes, look carefully at the pictures and repeat the last line of the previous page. *“When I’m driving in my car, I look up and see a...’ Can anyone see something on this page that rhymes with car? Yes! A star! Can we think of other words that rhyme with car and star? How about ‘I have to drive very f...”*
- Rhyme hunt! Hold up a coloured crayon and ask children to run and find something that rhymes with the crayon’s colour, shouting it out when they get there. *“Sink! Wow! That does rhyme with pink! Can anybody find something that rhymes with blue? You found glue!”*

#### Tip

Making up nonsense rhyming words is a great way for children to learn the rules of rhyming

#### Tip

Using lots of songs and chants helps children to recognise, repeat and make up new rhymes

## Syllable awareness

Children develop an awareness that syllables make up words. They begin to break words into syllables and blend syllables together to form words. Activities involve clapping, blending or segmenting words into syllables.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children how to break words up into syllables by demonstrating how you would do it
- Ask children how they might break up words into syllables and prompt them to try it
- Repeat different sounds to reinforce how you might break words into syllables and blend them back together to make words
- Use clapping, drums or other resources to count syllables, reinforcing that words are made up of different parts

### Inspiring Ideas

- At the beginning of the day, say hello to children by clapping along with the syllables in their names. Encourage children to join in and try to clap others' names.
- Syllable song! Encourage children to bang on a drum or stamp their feet along to the syllables in their names, interesting words or nursery rhymes.
- Separate children into two groups, giving some children the first syllable of a two syllable animal name and others the second syllable. Ask children to stand next to their partner and support them to blend the syllables together: "*chee...tah...cheetah! Well done!*"

### Tip

Compound words like goldfish and rainbow can be easily split up and put back together to help introduce children to the concept of syllables.

### Oral segmenting (from words to sounds)

Segmenting involves breaking words down into smaller parts. It is the opposite of blending sounds together to form words. When children are confident in segmenting 'chicken' into the two syllables chi-cken, they can segment the word sound by sound: ch-i-ck-en (for instance, when children are confident in segment 'table' into the two syllables ta-ble, they can segment the word sound by sound: t-a-b-l). Being able to break spoken words up into their separate sounds is an important building block for children's reading and writing.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children how you might break up words into their different parts
- Repeat the sounds that word parts make so children become familiar with different word sounds
- Discuss and ask questions about splitting words up into their sounds to provide children with lots of opportunities to practise breaking up words

#### Inspiring Ideas

- RAINBOW! Show children how you can clap each syllable: RAIN-BOW. As children's awareness develops, you can start with the first syllable, RAIN and clap each sound: r-ai-n. Repeat with the sounds of the second syllable, BOW: b-ow.
- Stand up sounds! Choosing simple words with three sounds, shout out a word and have one child quickly stand up, shout out the first sound, then sit down. Have the other children do the same, shouting out the sounds in order. *"The word is SHIP! 'SH'! 'I'! 'P'! Brilliant job!"*

# PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

## Oral blending (from sounds to words)

Oral blending (using sounds to create words) is the opposite of oral segmenting (breaking words down into sounds). Being able to blend sounds together to make words is an important building block for children's reading and writing.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss and ask questions about the parts that make up words and how they blend together
- Use books, poems and songs to give children lots of opportunities to hear and practise rhymes and repeated refrains to familiarise them with blending parts of words together
- Have children repeat the sounds of word parts so they become familiar with producing different sounds

### Inspiring Ideas

- Simon Says! Make Simon Says a bit trickier by sounding out the words and encouraging children to blend the sounds together before they complete the actions: *"Simon says touch your h-ea-d! Simon says j-um-p!"*
- What am I looking at? Support children to find the item you are carefully sounding out. *"What am I looking at? It's a d-o-g... yes! The DOG!"*



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INTRODUCTION  
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## PRINT AND LETTER KNOWLEDGE

**What do we mean by print and letter knowledge?**

As part of print and letter knowledge, children begin to identify letters of the alphabet, including naming lower and upper case letters. Children also start to understand that words are made up of a group of letters and recognise some familiar words by sight. Print knowledge develops children's awareness of the nature and use of print. Children learn to identify parts of a book, like the front cover, title and author and develop an interest in looking at books independently.

**Why is it important?**

Print and letter knowledge is critical in reading and understanding the meaning of text. By knowing that letters combine to make words and understanding that print is organised in a particular way, children develop an understanding of 'words' and how the system of printed words works. Print and letter knowledge are supported through interactions with adults and other children who point out letters, words other features of print, such as book titles.

### Identifying letters of the alphabet

#### Definition

Children learn to identify and name letters of the alphabet.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use visual tools such as plastic letters or cut out letters to help children become familiar with the shapes and names of letters
- Discuss and ask questions about the letters of the alphabet during letter games and activities
- Introduce and reinforce the names of letters by saying the letter name out loud while showing the letters in print
- Help children to recognise and name letters by supporting them to trace letters with their fingers and recreate letter shapes in different materials (e.g. sand, foam or paint)

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Letter Bingo! Hold up letters pulled from a bag and ask children to mark or put a counter down if they have the same letter on their bingo card. First to get a line of letters wins!
- Write a letter on a whiteboard or on a piece of paper in the centre of a table. Children can practise tracing the letter in the air with their finger, or moulding it out of playdough.
- Spread plastic letters or magnetic letters on a table or whiteboard. Describe the shape of a letter and ask children to find it for you. *“Can you find the letter that looks like a snake (S)? Can you find the letter that looks like two hills stuck together (M)?”*

#### Tip

As children become more confident in recognising different letter shapes, introduce a variety of letters (e.g. letters cut out of magazines, letter blocks, or magnetic letters) so children can recognise letters in different forms.

### Identifying lower case and upper case letters

Children learn to identify and understand the difference between lower and upper case letters.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use visual displays, materials or tools such as plastic letters or cut out letters to help children become familiar with the shapes and names of lower and upper case letters
- Discuss and ask questions about the characteristics of lower and upper case letters during letter games and activities
- Introduce and reinforce the names of lower and upper case letters by naming them when you see them in print
- Help children to recognise lower and upper case letters by supporting them to trace and write with different materials (e.g. flour, sand, or foam)

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When reading a story, point out the capital letters in the title, comparing them to the same letter written in lower case. *“Does anyone’s name begin with ‘T’, too? Let’s write your name out! Can you see that your first letter is an upper case letter?”*
- Memory Game! Can children match an upper case letter to its lower case letter? *“You’ve found an E and an e! That’s a pair!”*
- Sorting Letters! Hold up plastic letters or magnetic letters, say the letter name and ask whether it belongs in the lower or upper case letter pile.

#### Tip

Discussing the first letter in children’s written name can help to reinforce the idea of upper case letters.

### Understanding that print conveys meaning

Children begin to understand that print and text convey meaning, and that what we say can be communicated in writing. This includes being able to recognise their name in print and an appreciation that books tell a story using written words.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Read words out to children when you spot them in the classroom, outdoors and in books
- Use visual tools embedded in the environment, such as labels on food cartons or signs, to familiarise children with words and their meaning
- Take time to discuss and point out to children what words look like, what letters they have, and what different words mean

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Point out words on signs when outside. *"Look at this sign, can you see the hand? There is also a word, can you guess what it says? Yes, it says 'STOP!'"*
- I'm here! Have children 'sign in' each morning by choosing a card with their name on it, arranging magnetic letters on a whiteboard or, for older children, supporting them to write their name in a register.

### Understanding print as a system

Children develop an awareness of writing and print as a system. Children learn to recognise that words are read from left to right and top to bottom in English, and that books have different parts for example, the title, author, cover, or 'The End'.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use visual tools such as posters, magnetic letters and pages of books to help children understand that words are made up of a combination of letters, both lower case and upper case
- Show how to hold and read books, flipping each page from the start of the book to the end and pointing out the direction you're reading and the way you are holding a book when reading a story
- Give children plenty of opportunities to practise holding and 'reading' books themselves
- Discuss and ask children questions about the parts of a book

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When reading a story, point out the author and illustrator's names and read the title out loud. *"What does the title tell us about the story? Can you guess what the story will be about?"*
- Track words with your finger when reading a story to show children what reading looks like. Point out that you're reading the words from left to right and top to bottom. See if children can move their fingers along the text as you read.
- Awesome Authors! Support children to make their own book, showing them where to add their name as the author, talking about what the front cover tells us about a book, and adding page numbers to their drawing or writing.



# Early Years Library

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## EARLY WRITING

What do we  
mean by early  
writing skills?

As children develop, they begin to give meaning to the marks they make. Young children use fingers and tools to make marks on different materials such as paper, in sand and in paint. As children develop in skill and confidence, they learn to copy, trace and recreate letters of the alphabet using their fingers and writing materials like crayons and pencils. These activities help children to understand they can communicate through writing, and alongside the physical development of gross motor skills like balance and control, children develop the fine motor skills and control they need to begin their writing journey.

Why is it  
important

Being able to write allows children to communicate in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes. By having lots of early opportunities to produce letters and words for meaningful reasons (such as making signs or writing a shopping list) children understand that what they write can convey their ideas, thoughts and feelings to others.

### Mark making for meaning

Children learn to communicate and develop writing skills through early mark making. By incorporating mark making into their play, children can give meaning to the marks they make, and begin to understand how those marks, letters, numbers, pictures and words communicate meaning to others.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children how you use mark making and writing in a variety of ways to communicate with different people about different things
- Support children to draw and mark make to communicate ideas and experiences that are meaningful to them and show the power of communicating through the written word

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Shopping List! During a role play activity, prompt children to make a list to take to the shops, making marks or drawings to represent their favourite foods or ingredients to bake a cake.
- I'm here! Have children 'sign in' each morning by choosing a card with their name on it, arranging magnetic letters on a whiteboard or supporting them to write their name in a register.
- Perfect Postcards! Support children to draw and write a postcard for someone they love. Write 'Dear' and 'Love' out for children to copy and support them to make other meaningful marks, writing and drawing pictures. When children have finished their postcard, add an address to the envelope, talking about how the numbers and words help the post office to know where to take the letter.

#### Tip

Creative activities, like art and craft projects, give children opportunities to share their thoughts and experiences in different ways, preparing them to share their ideas through writing.

#### Tip

When you ask children to write about something, use set topics to help children scaffold their ideas (example topics include farm animals, dinosaurs, modes of transport, favourite foods, seasons, space or nature). Sensitive focus on topics and experiences that all children might have the opportunity to take part in, like park visits rather than holidays or expensive toys.

### Forming letters

Children begin to form letters of the alphabet.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use visual tools that you already have in your setting such as playdough, sand, slime or wooden letters to help children to see and form letters of the alphabet
- Write letters during activities with children, describing and naming the letter, and talking about how you move your hand or hold the tool you're using
- Use lots of different materials to copy and form letters
- Play letter games and activities, reinforcing the names and shapes of the letters

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When children are mark making in dry sand, show them how you might write the first letter of their name using your finger, a stick or a paint brush. As children become more experienced, introduce different letters and different tools.
- Letter hunt! Gather together pages from magazines and newspapers, choosing a letter that the children can hunt for, cut out and stick onto paper. Once children have shown each other their wonderful pictures, support them to finger paint or write the letters they have found onto a big piece of paper
- Using wooden or plastic letters, or even scrabble tiles in a bag, have each child pull out a selection of letters, supporting them to name and copy the letters onto a piece of paper. Read out all the funny words they have written and ask what they think the words might mean!

#### Tip

Children might need time to develop control over pens, crayons and paint brushes. Accept scribbles and drawings that can be difficult to interpret, and allow children to tell you about their creations.

### Writing your name

Children practise writing their names as a first step in learning how to write whole words.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Support children to draw and write their names using a variety of different writing tools
- Show children how you write the individual letters of their name, pointing out the upper case letter at the start
- Use visual tools that you already have in your setting such as wooden or plastic letters or their names on their pegs to help children to recognise and copy the letters from their name

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Using wooden or plastic letters, support children to find the letters that make up their name and put them in order, naming the letters as you go. Using brushes, sticks, the wheels of toy cars or pencils, support children to write their names in paint, sand or on paper.
- Ask children to find their name label next to their peg. Show children how you can copy their names onto paper, and support them to do the same. As children become more familiar with the activity, talk about the difference between lower and upper case letters, pointing out that their name has an upper case letter followed by lower case letters.
- Teddy is coming for a visit, but he doesn't know any of his new friends' names! Support children to write their names on stickers to help Teddy get to know everyone.

#### Tip

**Children may find it easier to write their full name using upper case letters. As their writing skills develop, introduce the lower case letters that they will need to use.**



# Early Years Library

## SERIES INTRODUCTION: EARLY NUMERACY

**Early numeracy skills lay a foundation for counting, understanding spatial relationships, and discovering patterns and connections in the world. Even young babies tune in to shapes, patterns and quantities, paying attention to sights and sounds around them.**

Practitioners can support children's natural curiosity by showing interest in what children see and ask and posing questions so children can offer thoughts or solutions. Through these interactions, children will develop early numeracy skills in the context of meaningful everyday experience, and then be able to apply these skills to new problems and contexts.

Practitioners do not need to be experts in mathematics. Numeracy in the early years can be part of everyday activities rather than taught at a scheduled time. For example, opportunities for supporting early numeracy arise when talking to children about how to make pieces fit when building towers, or when measuring out flour to make dough. Everyday interactions involving patterns, numbers and measuring allow children to explore number, quantity, space, and shapes. Children benefit from having a positive attitude towards numeracy and mathematical problems. Early years practitioners can support children to develop confidence and enthusiasm when exploring new activities, encouraging them to have a go without being worried about making mistakes.

The Early Years Library contains four early numeracy booklets, each covering a core numeracy skill and key practices that can be used to support skill development. The table on the next page presents the four booklets.

If you want to support:	Focus on:
Pattern and shape	Properties of shapes
	Spatial awareness
	Sorting and matching objects
	Identifying and repeating patterns
Measurement	Becoming familiar with how to measure
	Becoming familiar with charts and graphs
Numbers and counting	Learning to count out loud
	Recognising numerals
	Learning the order of numbers
	Matching numbers to quantity
	Comparing and matching quantity
	Counting and set production
	Ordinal numbers
Adding and taking away	Plus or minus one from a number
	Adding two numbers together
	Subtracting numbers from each other

For more information on the Early Years Library and to download the booklets, visit [www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary](http://www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary)

## **How can I use these booklets?**

The booklets can be used very flexibly and for different purposes:

- During new staff induction, to help new staff understand why they focus on certain skills and activities.
- When planning activities for the children based on your understanding of their interests, needs and the curriculum in your setting. Practices and strategies can be adapted to your context, to children’s age, and to your daily schedule.
- Throughout the day to get inspiring ideas for extending activities, responding to children and planning in the moment.

As a practitioner, you might find that you are already using many of these strategies and practices. This can give you the confidence that the work you are doing to support the children in your care is underpinned by evidence.



## Commonly used strategies

Evidence-based programmes recommend a range of strategies for practitioners. Throughout the Early Years Library, you will notice that some of these strategies are used more frequently to support some skills, while other strategies are used more frequently to support other skills. For instance, physical actions and activities to separate one number from another, such as clapping and jumping, are frequently used to teach children to count out loud, while visual displays, objects and materials are frequently used to help children familiarise with properties of shapes. Using a range of strategies is most likely to support young children's development. At times, as a practitioner you will also step back and let children experience challenge and joy in their learning without getting involved.

Strategies to support early numeracy skills include:

- Visual displays, objects and materials
- Discussion, questions and answers
- Didactic instruction and teacher modelling
- Drawing and writing
- Multimedia
- Strategy practice and physical learning
- Games, role-play and child modelling
- Timetabled routines
- Books, songs and nursery rhymes
- Art and creative projects

## Inspiring ideas

To support each of the skills, the Early Years Library offers inspiring ideas based on typical activities in evidence-based programmes. There are a range of activities suitable for individual, small group, and whole group activities. Some of the inspiring ideas are appropriate for in-the-moment interactions with children, while others require more planning. They are meant to inspire your practice, not dictate it. You can use the inspiring ideas to reflect on your practice, discuss ideas with colleagues and plan how to respond to children's interests and needs in relation to your curriculum.



Luis Arias/Unsplash



## Unique individuals

Research shows that each child develops in a unique way, rather than following a strictly linear pre-defined route through development in a specific order or timeframe. For this reason the Early Years Library is not presented in chronological order by age. Practitioners can use their professional judgement to gauge which skills a child may benefit from focusing on at different times.

## Inter-connected areas of development

While the booklets are presented separately, research shows that all areas of development are inter-connected. Supporting children's early numeracy skills will call on language and early literacy skills; supporting children's language and early literacy skills will call on social and emotional skills; and so on. The Early Years Library is designed to be flexible, allowing you to combine practices from across the booklets and return to the booklets in different ways at different times.







## Role of the adult in supporting child development

Early childhood education can help children build strong foundation skills in numeracy. When children have plenty of opportunities to explore and practise using early numeracy skills, they can apply the skills they learn to new problems and activities in their everyday life.

Practitioners can support children to develop these skills in a range of ways, for example by providing opportunities for children to count in different contexts, modelling and encouraging use of measuring and counting language (e.g. 'how many children can wash their hands at this sink?'), or talking to children about the different ways they could solve puzzles with shapes. Striking a balance between child-led and adult-guided experiences helps children develop their love of learning while also supporting and extending their learning. The Early Years Library highlights specific effective practices from evidence-based programmes that you can weave into your existing approaches.

### Are you using the Early Years Library?

We'd love to hear from you.  
Scan the code or  
visit [bit.ly/contact-eyl](https://bit.ly/contact-eyl)



# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Numeracy** Series

## PATTERN AND SHAPE

What do we  
mean by  
pattern and  
shape?

Children learn to recognise patterns and learn about the different physical properties of objects and shapes as they develop spatial awareness and begin to sort and categorise objects. As part of this, children learn about the different properties of different shapes, and become familiar with recognising and describing regular shapes (e.g., square, rectangle, oval etc) and the spaces between them using relational vocabulary (e.g., next to, on top, edge, corner, inside etc). Children also explore irregular shapes such as jigsaw puzzle pieces and building objects as they learn to understand what happens when shapes are combined, rotated, and taken apart. As part of pattern recognition, children learn to recognise similarities and differences, and the rules that underpin patterns and categorisation. Over time children can visualise what happens when shapes and patterns are changed, identify irregularities, and apply this learning to solving problems.

Why is it  
important

Early spatial awareness and pattern recognition are important early skills for mathematical reasoning and logic. Supporting children's early spatial awareness development and pattern recognition can support children's achievement in maths as they mature.

### Properties of shapes

Children become familiar with different properties of shapes (e.g., number of sides, corners, straight and curved edges). Children can explain why shapes are similar and different (e.g., triangle and square both have straight sides, but triangle has three sides, square has four sides). As part of their learning, children become increasingly confident describing and identifying 2D shapes and 3D shapes (e.g., triangle and pyramid, square and cube).

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce shapes and their properties by using visual displays, materials and tools
- Talk about the properties of shapes using words like 'corners' and 'sides'
- Ask children questions about the properties of shapes and how they are similar and different

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Challenge children to make shapes with their bodies, or with help from a friend! Support children to discuss the properties of the shape they're making. *"Your mouth is making a very interesting oval shape! The edges are curved but it doesn't look like a circle- it looks more like an oval egg!" "I'm making a triangle with my two hands. Can we all count the sides?"*
- Shape hunt! Ask children to go on a hunt for a shape you really need, but you can't remember its name! *"I'm looking for a shape that's round all the way round!"*
- Feeling for shapes! Put a selection of 2D shapes into a feely box and challenge children to describe and name the shape they are feeling without looking. *"It has pointy corners? Hmm, so it can't be a circle... how many corners does it have? 3! So, what shapes have more than 3 corners? So, it can't be a rectangle, square or diamond! I give up! What shape is it?"*
- Prepare for some interesting shape learning by supplying sticks and balls of play dough (or marshmallows!) for children to build their own 2D and 3D shapes. Allow them to discuss their creations, point out the shapes you notice, and support them with more complex shape names.

### Spatial awareness

Children develop spatial reasoning by making designs with shapes and pattern blocks and solving shape puzzles and problems. Children learn to visualise what happens when shapes are combined, taken apart, and rotated and can describe shapes and blocks in their patterns and space (e.g., 'between', 'in front of', 'behind', 'next to', 'on top of', etc.).

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Make building blocks, shapes, and jigsaw puzzles available for children to play with freely
- Talk about shapes and their properties when making designs and solving shape puzzles and problems
- Challenge children to solve different shape puzzles and problems

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Using a selection of card or paper shapes, support children to build a picture using triangles, squares and circles. *"That is a brilliant person you've made! I like how you have used a circle for the head at the top, a rectangle for the body below the head, and triangles for buttons down the middle."*
- Building Challenge! Children can choose a picture of a famous building to try and recreate! Support children to choose their own resources and refer back to the picture as they go along. *"Ooh the Eiffel Tower! What a challenge to build! Let's look at the picture and see what shapes we need to find or make... so the bottom of the tower looks a bit like a triangle, and the top is a tower going straight up. Let's see what we can do!"*
- Shape Butterfly! On outlines of butterflies, have children stick small cut-out shapes on one wing to make a very beautiful pattern. *"Butterflies wings match, they are the same on both sides... can we copy the beautiful pattern we've made on this wing by putting the same shapes on the other side, too?"*

#### Tip

Give children plenty of opportunities to explore building with different shapes of blocks, encouraging them to incorporate other resources including other building materials and small world toys so they can experiment with how different shapes fit together.



### Sorting and matching objects

Children are able to sort objects based on key characteristics such as size, shape, or number. As children develop their understanding of sorting and matching objects, they can be challenged to decide how to sort objects that have some key attributes in common (for example, sorting a group of different shapes by size not shape) and can sort a group of objects differently by using different rules.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Provide a range of different natural and everyday objects and materials for children to sort which might include leaves, stones, jewels or buttons
- Talk about the different ways objects can be sorted based on their properties and ask children to sort objects in different ways

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Jam Jar Job! Invite children to help you organise your jam jars by finding the correct lid and matching it to the right size and shape jam jar. Talk to children about how we know when it matches and when it does not. *“This lid is too big for this jar! Is there a smaller one? That’s right, this one fits just right!”*
- We’re going to the zoo! Have children build a zoo using blocks to form different enclosures for different animals. Encourage children to sort the animals in a variety of different ways. *“Why did you choose to put these animals together? Some animals live in the water, some walk on land and some fly in the air. Do they need to be in the same place?”*
- What’s my rule? With a selection of shapes that can sorted in different ways (by shape, by colour and by size) make groups by colour and ask: *“What rule did I use to put all of these shapes in one pile? What do they have in common? Their colour, that’s right!”* Encourage children to sort the piles in different ways and tell you what their rule is.

#### Tip

When children are exploring their own ways to sort and categorise objects, support them in expressing the rule they have decided to follow. *“What do all the things in this pile have in common? Oh, you have decided to sort your piles by big, medium and small!”*

### Identifying and repeating patterns

Children can recognise patterns that repeat (●●●● or ●●●●, for example) and identify the smallest repeating unit. Once children can identify the repeating unit, they can copy the pattern, and then extend it. Children notice that there is a difference between a repeating pattern, like stripes, and a non-repeating pattern, like a floral pattern on their t-shirt.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce different types of repeating patterns
- Ask children to copy and extend patterns and discuss what the smallest repeating unit is
- Provide a range of natural and everyday objects and materials, as well as blocks and shapes, for children to copy and extend their own patterns

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Clap, stamp or use musical instruments like drums, bells or cymbals to make repeating sound patterns. Begin by showing children the first part of the pattern and asking them to copy what you are doing, then ask them to repeat the pattern. *“Can you copy my sound pattern? [CLAP, CLAP, STAMP] That’s brilliant! Can we keep the pattern going? [CLAP, CLAP, STAMP//CLAP, CLAP, STAMP//CLAP, CLAP, STAMP] What a fantastic sound pattern you’re making!”*
- Using objects found outside, set up a repeating pattern (e.g. leaf, stone, leaf, stone) and ask the children to copy the pattern with their own materials. Support children to continue the pattern. *“I’m going to add a leaf to the end. What would come next?”*

#### Tip

Support children to notice patterns in their environment like the stripes on their top, or the pattern of paving stones.

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Numeracy** Series

## MEASUREMENT

What do we  
mean by  
measurement?

Children can engage with, and enjoy early experiences of measurement (such as playing with measuring tapes, balance scales, or lining up objects), graphs (such as voting on the book they will read first at story time) and corresponding language (such as 'heaviest', 'shorter' or 'more/less'). Young children are not expected to understand the more advanced principles underpinning these skills such as making sure all the units are the same size (standardised units of measurement), understanding why there are no gaps or overlaps between the units of measurement (i.e., placing units end to end), measuring in straight lines, and using the correct techniques in different measurement tools (e.g., when to use a measuring tape or a ruler). These more advanced skills will develop as they move through school.

Why is it  
important

By exploring measurements and graphs, children can see how maths can be used in everyday life to solve problems and represent information. Children can draw on these early experiences to support their understanding as they grow. These early skills help to support children's understanding of counting and quantities in order to make comparisons.

## Becoming familiar with how to measure

Children have the opportunity to experience measuring objects by their length, height, width, and weight using a variety of methods and units of measurement (for example using measuring tapes, string, or counting blocks). As children have more experience of measurement, they learn to describe properties using the measurement units (e.g., 'four blocks long') and use measuring words like 'smallest', 'largest', 'heavier', 'lighter', 'taller' and 'shorter' to make comparisons.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Talk with children about the properties of objects using measurement vocabulary and ask them questions to compare different objects
- Provide opportunities for children to measure objects using a variety of non-standard measures, for example, linking cubes or crayons

### Inspiring Ideas

- When children are making a tower out of stacking blocks, playing with toys of different sizes, or filling small and large containers during messy play, encourage them to line up the resources by size (perhaps by height, length, or how much they can hold). *"This dinosaur is definitely the biggest. Can you find a dinosaur that is shorter than this one?"*
- Height Hands! Ask children to measure their height by using their hands. *"Horses' heights are measured by using our hands! The tallest horse EVER was 21 hands tall! Shall we see how tall we are by using our hands?"*
- Using balance scales, support children to compare the weight of objects and guess which objects might be the heaviest. *"That side of the scale is almost touching the table and that side is up in the air! So, the leaves must be lighter than the pebbles! Can we find anything that might be heavier than the pebbles?"*
- When baking with children, use lots of measuring language alongside measuring spoons, jugs and weighing scales. *"Wow, the scales say this weighs 200 grams! How many more spoonfuls of flour do you think we'll need for the scales to say it weighs 300g? Look, the numbers are getting higher as we fill it up, that means it's getting heavier!"*
- Support children to pour from a large container into smaller container, beginning to introduce the concept of volume. *"Which jug holds the most? Now they're both full, which one feels the heaviest?"*

#### Tip

Have balance scales or kitchen scales, rulers and measuring tapes as part of your continuous provision both indoors and outdoors so children can explore the idea of measuring during free play.

#### Tip

Activities like a sand pit and baking give children practical experience of the language of measurement and using early measurement skills to solve problems and produce meaningful outcomes.

### Becoming familiar with charts and graphs

Children become familiar with charts and graphs (for example, tally and bar charts) through meaningful experiences. The charts and graphs children create should have meaning and an outcome that children will see immediately in order to enhance their understanding and appreciation of what charts and graphs mean. For example, children will vote on what activity to participate in first that day, rather than voting on everyone's favourite activity. These early experiences of creating charts and graphs can be a valuable tool for capturing children's voice by showing them their views are valued and make a difference in their learning environment.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Visually display charts and graphs. For example, you could build a graph using characters to show which is the most popular book to read at the next story time
- Talk to children about the charts and graphs you have created and use the words "more" and "less" to ask questions (e.g., "Did we see more flies or ants in the garden?")

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Tallest Tower Bar chart! At story-time, have each child place one brick/block/cube next to the book they would like to hear first. Their votes will build towers next to the books. "Which tower is the tallest? Yes! That means that most children want to read this book first! How many children wanted to read the other book first? Shall we count the blocks and see?"
- Using a display, support children to record how they got to their setting each day for a week. This can be represented in different ways, for example, by using stickers or voting with toy cars, buses etc. "We all get to nursery in different ways. How do most children get here? Walking, that's right."

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Numeracy** Series

## NUMBERS AND COUNTING

What do we  
mean by  
numbers and  
counting?

Becoming familiar with numbers, numerals (written numbers) and learning to count are important skills for early numeracy. Children learn to count out loud in the correct order, recognise numerals and sequence numbers from 0 to 10. As they become more confident with numbers and counting, children learn that the numbers they say, and the numerals they know, represent quantity and they can compare sets that have 'more' and 'less'.

Why is it  
important

Young children will engage with numbers, numerals and number problems spontaneously and should be supported to explore and experiment with numbers and counting in their everyday environments and learning activities to develop a positive attitude to numeracy. Allowing children to explore and experiment with numbers, counting, and numerals in play allows them to practise and develop their early numeracy skills. Children can then apply these skills to new settings and new problems they come across with increasing confidence and familiarity.



### Learning to count out loud

Children learn to count out loud in order, repeating verbally a number list. It does not necessarily mean they understand that the words stand for a certain quantity.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate counting out loud for children and encourage them to join in on counting activities, asking them what numbers they think come next
- Have children do physical actions and activities to separate one number from another, e.g. clapping, stomping, jumping etc.
- Use a variety of props (such as counting wands or puppets) to engage children in activities and encourage them to say numbers out loud
- Use songs and videos to provide a scaffold for children to practise counting out loud

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Get children ready to race, tidy up or sing a song by counting up or down: “We’re going to go on 5-ready? 1...2...3...4...5... GO!”
- Clap and Count! When singing a song which involves counting, encourage children to clap, stomp or jump once for each number they sing to help children separate one number from another.
- While counting aloud to ten, children start as curled up and small as possible, as they count they can slowly expand, stand up, and reach to the ceiling, ending up as tall as possible when they reach ten. They can then be supported to count backwards from ten, while slowly curling into a ball!

#### Tip

Providing opportunities for children to count backwards, for example in countdowns, can help them to practise counting in sequence. This can help to reinforce their learning and supports them to start counting from starting points other than one.

### Recognising numerals

Children learn to recognise numerals (written numbers) and can name them. This does not necessarily mean they understand that the numerals stand for a certain quantity.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Identify numerals for children throughout activities by pointing them out and naming them to help children become more familiar with numerals
- Ask children about what numerals they recognise and encourage them to describe what numerals look like (e.g., the number eight is two circles)
- Introduce numerals to children by using visual displays and tools such as print outs of numerals, foam number manipulatives, number lines and charts, or number dice

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Number Hunt: Hide various numerals around the classroom in lots of different forms (e.g. labels, number cards, foam numbers). Have children roam around the classroom and find as many target numbers as they can, bringing them back to show their peers.
- When children spot a numeral, challenge them to find the same numeral in their environment. *"You've spotted an 8! Can you find another 8? An 8 looks like two circles, one standing on top of the other!"*
- What's your numeral? Using a number line, support children to find their age from the numerals. *"So, you are four years old! Yes, that's a '4'! How old is your sister/ brother/ friend? Can you find their age?"* Encourage children to start at 1 and count up to their age by pointing to each numeral on the number line.

#### Tip

Support children to trace important numerals like their age, or numerals that they see in activities as a way of reinforcing their learning.

#### Tip

Point out numerals in children's environment: price tags in shops or role play, numbers on street signs and clocks, and labels on food containers.

### Learning the order of numbers

Children learn the sequence of numerals and can count in order. Over time, children will know which numbers come directly before and after one another and can line up numerals in the correct sequence. Learning the order of numbers and being able to recite them in order does not necessarily mean children understand that these stand for a certain quantity.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate saying numbers out loud as numerals are placed in sequence to reinforce the order of numbers for children
- Use visual tools such as number cards, number manipulatives, number lines and number charts to help children visualise the sequence of numbers
- Talk to children about what numbers come before and after target numbers, and ask them to help you count along number lines and charts

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Support children to count along magnetic numbers from 1 to 5. *“What number comes next? 1...2...3...4...5...? 6! That’s right! Can you find the 6 and add it to the other numbers?”*
- Detective game! Every night, one of the mischievous numbers from the number line goes missing! Can children be number detectives and figure out which number has disappeared? Support children to count along the number line and shout out the number that is missing.
- Practise ‘counting on’ with children by starting to count on a number line from numbers other than 1. *“Let’s start at 3 today! We can miss out 1 and 2... so, 3...4...5”*

### Matching numbers and numerals to quantity

Children develop an understanding that the numbers they say, and the numerals they know, represent quantity. Children learn to recognise the link between numbers and quantity by counting objects, counting things that can't be moved (e.g., dots on dice or dominoes), counting repetitions (five jumps, two steps forward), and representing numbers on their fingers. Children can then link these quantities to the appropriate numerals.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate counting objects out loud for children, discussing the activity and 'tagging' one object to one number as you go. Encourage children to copy and continue counting out quantities in the same way to help them practise
- Use visual tools such as number cards, number charts, numeral manipulatives, dice, and counting manipulatives (e.g., figurines, tokens, linking cubes, or beans) to help children match numerals to the correct number of items

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Jump and Count! Have children line up and get ready to jump! Hold up signs with different numerals on them. *"What number is this? A three, yes! Jump forward three times!"*
- After building a small world of animal homes, give each home a 'house number' by placing a numeral (1 to 5) next to each house. *"Can anyone tell what the number on the pigsty is? Number 3! Yes! Can we find 3 pigs to put into house number 3? So how many bears live in number 4?"*
- Number Bingo! Have children take turns to roll a dice. When they have counted the dots on the dice, they can put a counter on to their bingo card which has the numerals 1 to 6. First to fill up their card wins!

#### Tip

Using fingers to count is an easy way of helping children to link the numbers they know and say out loud to quantity.

### Comparing and matching quantity

Children develop an understanding of numbers having higher and lower values, translating to more or less in terms of quantity. Children can count the number of objects in two sets and compare these to explain which group has more. Children link this knowledge to understanding that, for example, five is 'more than' three, both by knowing that the quantities they represent are different and by their number place value.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate to children how to count and compare different sets, and discuss your findings with children to make comparisons
- Ask children about the different numbers and quantities they see and count, reinforcing correct answers and counting through discussion
- Use visual tools such as number cards, number charts, number dice, and counting manipulatives (e.g., dominoes, tokens, blocks, or beans) to help children visualise number and quantity as they contrast and compare groups

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When playing a board game with a dice, prompt children to count the number of dots on the dice, then compare how many moves they are able to make to the other players. *"You rolled a 6, so you can move six spaces! I rolled a 2, you can move more spaces than me! 6 is more than 2! Oh look, we both rolled a three! That's the same number of spaces... those numbers are equal."*
- Share blocks out unevenly into three groups of 5, 6 and 7. Support children to count how many blocks are in each pile. *"We need to build the tallest tower, which group has more blocks? Yes, that group does look the biggest, let's build the towers and check! So, 7 is more than 6 and 5"*
- Using a number line, support children to add quantities of leaves, toys or counters that match the appropriate numerals. *"Which group has the most leaves? And which has the least? Here's 3 leaves, that's more leaves than 2! That's right! But 3 leaves is less than...?"*



### Counting and set production

Children can count and produce sets. This includes counting out sets of objects, spaces (e.g. the spaces on a board game) and repetitions (e.g. five jumps or two steps forward). As children develop, they will eventually be able to count moving targets or things that they can't currently see a set of (for example, the number of cars that have driven past their window).

As children become more confident with counting, they will produce sets of larger numbers, be able to look at a small group of items and understand how many there are without having to count them all (also known as 'subitising') and develop their understanding of how numbers are added together or taken away from one another in different combinations to make the same total (known as 'number bonds').

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use visual displays and tools such as number charts, number dice, and everyday objects in the classroom (e.g., toys, blocks, cups, pens etc) so children can practise producing sets of different numbers
- Invite children to count sets as they complete everyday activities in the classroom and beyond, demonstrating for support as necessary
- Talk to children about how they can use their counting skills to solve everyday problems and tasks (e.g., making sure everyone had a plate for snack, gathering enough teddies for their classmates, making sure they have enough pegs to hang out clothes, or making sure they have the right number of lids for their jars)

#### Inspiring Ideas

- During role play, ask the shopkeeper for different numbers of items from your shopping list. *"I would like 3 bananas and 2 tins of baked beans, please."*
- On a walk or drive, support children to count how many buses, signs or red cars they spot on their journey.
- Children take turns setting the table for snack time or for a teddy bear's picnic. Each person or teddy needs a plate, cup and spoon. *"How many teddies/ people are there? 7! How many plates do we need? Yes! Let's count out 7 plates, 7 cups and 7 spoons then set the table!"*

# NUMBERS AND COUNTING

## Ordinal numbers

Children develop an understanding of numbers as first, second, third, etc., in a sequence

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Talk to children about the order of things when you notice an opportunity during the day
- Label the different positions in sequences children see in everyday activities
- Use visual displays and tools such as number cards, number lines and charts, and toys to help children visualise the sequence of numbers and label the order they appear in

### Inspiring Ideas

- When children are waiting patiently in a line to go inside point out where they are standing in the line! *"You are first in line, you are second in line, and you are third... Who is going to wash their hands first?"*
- Toy Race! Set up a race between 3 toy cars or balls on a slope. *"Let's guess which car will arrive first. Which one might come second? Shall we check and see? Let's race!"* After the races, children can put the cars behind signs that say '1st', '2nd' and '3rd'. *"This sign says 'first', we can put all our fastest cars here!"*
- Form a line using chairs or individual circle mats and ask children where they would like to sit on the bus. *"Teddy is driving us today, so they are in the first seat! Which seat would you like to be in? The fifth seat! Good choice!"*

### Tip

Expose children to the language of 'first', 'second', and 'third' etc. during everyday routines and fun activities like role play so children can build their knowledge and experiences of ordinal numbers.

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Numeracy** Series

## ADDING AND TAKING AWAY

What do we  
mean by  
adding and  
taking away?

Adding is the process of working out the total of two or more numbers whereas taking away (or subtracting) is the process of taking one number away from another. At first, children will count objects in groups to figure out how many there are in total, and then again to figure out how many there are once objects have been added or taken away. As they progress, children will be able to find the answer without counting each object out individually. After developing their number and counting skills, children will build on these skills by adding and taking away numbers up to 10. Children begin to understand and remember how to add and take away through practical, meaningful experiences during day-to-day activities.

Why is it  
important

Being able to add and take away is foundational to many other mathematics skills and prepare children for learning about other topics, including multiplication and division, in school.

## ADDING AND TAKING AWAY

### Plus or minus one from a number

Children become familiar with adding or subtracting one from a small number of objects (0-10). As they develop their confidence with numbers, they may be able to name the final number without counting out the whole set (also called 'subitising').

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- While describing adding and taking away one, demonstrate the action using small objects and finger counting to help children visualise the concept
- Talk to children about what they think will happen if they add or take away from the set they already have
- When practicing adding and taking away one from a set, use visual tools like small everyday objects (e.g. tokens, toys, and linking cubes) to help children visualise what happens

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Use your fingers when singing counting songs to show children what 'one more' and 'one less' looks like. *"Here are 3 little ducks about to go swimming! 'Mummy Duck says QUACK QUACK COME BACK! And two little ducks came swimming back!' One of my little ducks hasn't come swimming back!"*
- When children are choosing their own fruit at snack time, support children to count how many pieces of fruit or crackers they have on their plate, then count again after adding one more. *"How many pieces did you have at first? And how many do you have now I have given you one more piece?"*
- When playing 'Five Little Speckled Frogs' ask children: *"How many frogs are sitting on the speckled log? Now one of your frog friends has fallen into the pool! How many frogs are left? Let's count and see!"*

## ADDING AND TAKING AWAY

### Adding two numbers together

Children become familiar with adding two small numbers (0-10) together. This builds on other numeracy skills, such as counting and set production and subitising. Children begin to add two numbers together by counting the number of objects in front of them one for one, and comparing how many objects they have before and after. Children then develop an understanding that numbers, when added together or taken away from one another in different ways, make the same total (also known as 'number-bonds').

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Describe and demonstrate to children what happens when two sets are combined, asking children to tell you what they think will happen throughout the activity
- Use visual tools like small everyday objects (e.g. blocks, counting bears, or seeds) to help children understand what happens when two sets are added together

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Help children to plant sunflowers in rows. *"We have planted three seeds in the first row, and three seeds in the second row... How many sunflowers have we planted altogether? How could we figure it out? We could wait and count the shoots, yes! Maybe we could count on our fingers, too? 3 seeds and 3 more seeds... that makes 6 seeds!"*
- Using two dice when playing a board game, support children to add the numbers together to see how many spaces they should move. At first, children will do this by counting the dots on the two dice. *"Can you count the dots altogether? 1...2... yes! Now on the next dice... 3...4...5! You can move 5 spaces! Brilliant!"* As they become more experienced, children will begin to remember number bonds. *"You rolled a two and a three again! Can you remember what two and three together make? Yes! 5!"*
- When building a tower with a friend, support each child to count how many blocks they have. *"You have four blocks and your friend has two blocks, how many blocks do you have altogether? Shall we build a team tower and see?"*

#### Tip

Children learn about addition through practical experiences where they can see (and count or subitise) objects in groups in front of them.

## ADDING AND TAKING AWAY

### Taking away numbers from each other numbers from each other

Children become familiar with taking away (or subtracting) one small number from another (0-10).

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Describe and demonstrate to children what happens when units are taken away from sets, asking them to tell you what they think will happen throughout the activity
- Visual tools like small everyday objects (e.g. blocks, counting bears, or seeds) can be used to help children understand what happens when units are taken away from a set

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When building a tower, support children to count how many blocks they have used. *"If two blocks fell off your tower, how many do you think would you have left? Shall we take two blocks off and check?"*
- At story time, support children to use their fingers to count through objects or events in the story. For example, show how many pieces of fruit a character has when they set off on their journey and how that might have changed by the end. *"Oh no! Now the monkey has taken a piece of fruit AND the ostrich has taken a piece of fruit AND the zebra has taken a piece of fruit, too! Three pieces of fruit... gone! Can we put three fingers down? How many pieces of fruit do they have left?"*
- The Pirate toys must guard their treasure of four large gold coins overnight. In the morning, some coins are missing! *"Oh no! How many coins were there yesterday? 4! And how many are there today? Only 2?! How many do you think we need to look for? So, 4 coins takeaway 2 coins leaves us with 2 coins! Okay, let's search for the missing treasure and see if we're right!"*



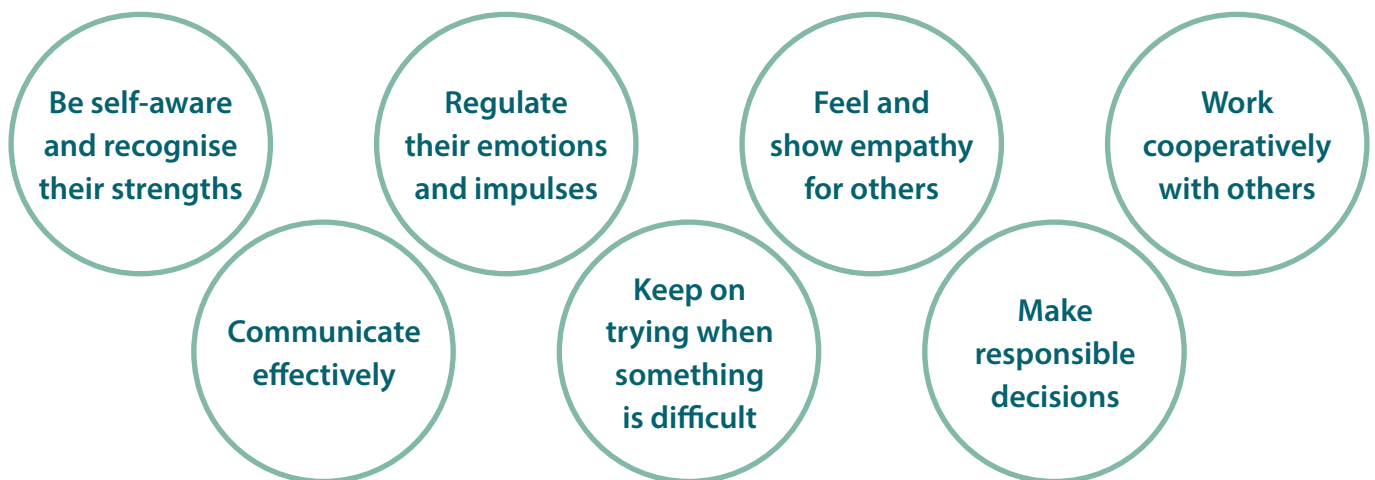
# Early Years Library

## SERIES INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

**Social skills are necessary to develop and maintain satisfying relationships. Emotional skills are used to identify and manage our thoughts, emotions and behaviours, and to understand the thoughts, emotions and behaviours of other people.**

Before their first birthday, children develop attachment with key people in their lives, and they begin to express their emotions, and understand that people's faces and voices can tell you something about how they are feeling. This development continues through to adulthood.

Social and emotional skills help children to:



Social and emotional skills in the early years can be integrated in everyday activities. For example, opportunities for supporting early social skills arise when working in groups, or when dealing with everyday conflicts.

The Early Years Library contains six social and emotional skills booklets, each covering a core social and emotional skill and key practices that can be used to support skill development. The table on the next page presents the six booklets.

If you want to support:	Focus on:
Recognising and expressing emotions	Learning feeling words
	Identifying feelings using facial expressions and body language
	Describing how we feel
	Recognising other people's feelings
Regulating emotions	Calming down
	Generating, choosing and implementing solutions to cope with strong emotions
Communicating with others	Communicating non-verbally
	Engaging in conversation
	Listening
	Greeting others and introducing yourself
	Using polite language
Working together	Sharing and taking turns
	Team work
	Being helpful
	Asking for help
Developing positive relationships	Developing friendships
	Giving compliments and using kind words
	Valuing similarities and differences
	Being kind and caring
Resolving conflict	Speaking up during conflict
	Finding solutions for conflict

For more information on the Early Years Library and to download the booklets, visit [www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary](http://www.EIF.org.uk/EarlyYearsLibrary)

## How can I use these booklets?

The booklets can be used very flexibly and for different purposes:

- During new staff induction, to help new staff understand why they focus on certain skills and activities.
- When planning activities for the children based on your understanding of their interests, needs and the curriculum in your setting. Practices and strategies can be adapted to your context, to children's age, and to your daily schedule.
- Throughout the day to get inspiring ideas for extending activities, responding to children and planning in the moment.

As a practitioner, you might find that you are already using many of these strategies and practices. This can give you the confidence that the work you are doing to support the children in your care is underpinned by evidence.



## Commonly used strategies

Evidence-based programmes recommend a range of strategies for practitioners. Throughout the Early Years Library, you will notice that some of these strategies are used more frequently to support some skills, while other strategies are used more frequently to support other skills. For instance, modelling praise is used to teach children how to give compliments, while visual displays like stickers and posters are used to support discussions about emotions. Using a range of strategies is most likely to support young children's development. At times, as a practitioner you will also step back and let children experience challenge and joy in their learning without getting involved.

Strategies to support social and emotional skills include:

- Discussion, questions and answers
- Didactic instruction and teacher modelling
- Games, role-play and child modelling
- Strategy practice and physical learning
- Visual displays, objects and materials
- Books, songs and nursery rhymes
- Art and creative projects
- Drawing and writing
- Timetabled routines
- Multimedia

## Inspiring ideas

To support each of the skills, the Early Years Library offers inspiring ideas based on typical activities in evidence-based programmes. There are a range of activities suitable for individual, small group, and whole group activities. Some of the inspiring ideas are appropriate for in-the-moment interactions with children, while others require more planning. They are meant to inspire your practice, not dictate it. You can use the inspiring ideas to reflect on your practice, discuss ideas with colleagues and plan how to respond to children's interests and needs in relation to your curriculum.





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## Unique individuals

Research shows that each child develops in a unique way, rather than following a strictly linear pre-defined route through development in a specific order or timeframe. For this reason, the Early Years Library is not presented in chronological order by age. Practitioners can use their professional judgement to gauge which skills a child may benefit from focusing on at different times.

## Inter-connected areas of development

While the booklets are presented separately, research shows that all areas of development are inter-connected. Supporting children's social and emotional skills will call on language and early literacy; supporting children's early numeracy will call on social and emotional skills; and so on. The Early Years Library is designed to be flexible, allowing you to combine practices from across the booklets and return to the booklets in different ways at different times.



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## Role of the adult in supporting child development

Early childhood education can help children build strong social and emotional skills. When children play together, they have opportunities to manage their emotions and behaviours and deal with everyday problems. Children benefit from warm and supportive interactions with early years practitioners who can give guidance and opportunities to develop a range of social-emotional skills. Striking a balance between child-led and adult-guided experiences helps children develop their love of learning while also supporting and extending their learning.



Practitioners can support children to develop these skills in a range of ways, for example by modelling friendly behaviours, introducing books and discussions on the topic, or supporting role-play activities and games. The Early Years Library highlights specific effective practices from evidence-based programmes that you can weave into your existing approaches.

**Are you using the  
Early Years Library?**

We'd love to hear from you.  
Scan the code or  
visit [bit.ly/contact-eyl](https://bit.ly/contact-eyl)



# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

What do we mean by recognising and expressing emotions

From a very young age, children experience a wide range of emotions. Developing an understanding of what they themselves and others are feeling helps to build strong relationships with others. Many children need adult support to recognise their feelings. Using words and body language to describe and express emotions like sadness, anger, surprise and joy is the first step in helping children to manage their feelings.

Why is it important

Children who learn to identify and express their feelings in a healthy way are more likely to develop positive relationships with others. Helping children to develop a sense of empathy encourages tolerance and acceptance of others.



### Learning feeling words

Introducing 'feeling' words into children's daily vocabulary helps them to identify and label how they themselves or others are feeling. Discussing the meaning of new feeling words is important so that children understand different feelings.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce and discuss feeling words and reflect on what they mean
- Use visual tools like feelings faces and photos to support children to label emotions

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Introduce new and interesting feeling words regularly with matching expressions. *"If you're happy and you know it, laugh out loud, HA HA! If you're cross and you know it, give a growl, GRR, GRR! If you're proud and you know it, say 'Go me!'"*
- Add a Little Literacy! Introduce a new feeling word for each letter of the alphabet *"A is for Angry, B is for Bored"* See how far you can get!
- When reading or telling a story, describe the character's feelings to children using a wide range of feeling words and help to explain their meaning. *"She took so long to bake her cake, but she feels so satisfied! Satisfied means happy with how things have turned out"*

#### Tip

Begin with 'simple' feelings like happy, sad and angry before moving on to more complicated feelings like frustrated, jealous or proud.

### Identifying feelings using facial expressions and body language

Being able to tell what other people are feeling by looking at their face or body language is an important skill that also helps children to recognise their own emotions. Giving children opportunities to discuss facial expression/body posture, and to practise making their own facial expressions, can help them make the connection with how we feel on the inside.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss and reflect on how we feel inside during different emotions
- Use visual tools such as feelings faces and photos to encourage children's understanding of the facial expressions tied to emotions

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When you feel a strong emotion, talk to children about how your face looks and how you are holding your body. *"I'm feeling so happy, can you see that my mouth is smiling and my eyes are crinkled at the edges? I look different when I'm sad, though. My face frowns and sometimes I curl my body up like this..."* As well as happy and sad, some interesting feelings to act out could include feeling scared, proud or cross!
- Using pictures of faces from storybooks, magazines or drawings, ask: *"can you spot someone who is feeling sad? How is this person feeling? How can you tell they are feeling sad?"*
- Feelings Charades! Whisper a feeling word to one child and have them act out clues for the other children with their face, body language and tone of voice.

#### Tip

Mirrors are a great resource that children can use for practising their feelings faces.

### Describing how we feel

Children express their emotions through their behaviour before they learn ways of expressing their needs and emotions with words. Putting feelings into words helps children to manage situations, particularly with strong emotions like feeling cross or upset.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss with children times when they have felt particular emotions and reflect on other situations which might make them feel the same way. Use visual tools such as feelings faces or posters to support the discussions
- Use scenarios and stories to encourage children to identify how they might feel in those situations

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Let's Talk! So children can learn about feelings and how to express them, demonstrate talking about a time when you felt scared, angry, surprised or excited. *"Sometimes I feel a bit scared when it's very dark. When do you feel scared?"* To extend the activity, you might give children an opportunity to pick a 'feelings face' that is the same as the feeling you have just described and talk about a time when they felt the same.
- Show children photographs of themselves from their observations. *"There you are! How did you feel when you were doing this?"*
- So children can learn that feelings change over time, when reading or telling a story, have the children give a thumbs up when the character has a comfortable feeling or a thumbs down if they have an uncomfortable feeling. At the end of the story ask: *"How did [the character] feel at the start of the story? Do they feel different now?"*

#### Tip

To support children to describe and express their feelings, puppets can be used to show what it's like to describe a particular feeling: *"I feel happy today because we had so much fun playing."*

#### Tip

To expand children's feelings vocabulary, ask: *"Can you think of another word for that feeling?"*

#### Tip

Use praise when children talk about their feelings or describe them well. Use 'comfortable' and 'uncomfortable' to describe emotions rather than good or bad. This helps to show children that feelings are normal and that it's good to talk about them.

# RECOGNISING AND EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

## Recognising other people's feelings

Considering other people's perspectives helps to develop empathy and the ability to respond sensitively to others. This involves thinking about how somebody might be feeling and why. It is important for children to have lots of opportunities to practise this skill during the day.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Encourage children to reflect on how others feel during daily activities
- Use stories and pictures to encourage children to identify how the people in the images are feeling

### Inspiring Ideas

- Show children a photograph or a feeling face and ask: *"How does this person feel? Why do they feel surprised/frustrated/upset? What do you think happened to make them feel that way?"*
- When reading or telling a story, ask: *"How do you think [the character] is feeling? What happened to make them feel that way? Would you feel the same or different if it happened to you?"*
- Place 'feeling faces' in spots around the room and say: *"You have to stand up on stage and sing a song, run to how you feel!"* and *"You have to search for treasure under ooey-gooey slime, run to how you feel!"* Point out that children can feel different ways about the same things!
- Practise recognising emotions throughout the day, particularly when other children are feeling strong emotions: *"How does your friend feel? How do you feel when that happens to you?"*

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## REGULATING EMOTIONS

What do we  
mean by  
regulating  
emotions

Emotional self-regulation means being able to monitor and manage one's emotions and related behaviour. It includes being able to calm down when experiencing strong emotions and once calm, being able to choose the best course of action. Young children will still be developing these skills, so they require adult support through modelling and coaching. Some children will find it easier than others to regulate their emotions. Starting with some knowledge of emotions and words for identifying them will provide children with the skills to understand their own feelings and those of others, and in turn regulate their emotions accordingly.

Why is it  
important

Our emotions are closely connected to our thoughts and behaviours. Learning how to regulate our emotions helps us to manage our feelings and our reaction to a situation. In doing so, it enables children to express themselves in context-appropriate ways and make decisions about how to respond to challenges.

## Calming down

Learning calming techniques can help children regain a sense of control when they experience strong emotions such as anger, frustration, excitement, worry or feeling upset. Structured step-by-step strategies, and quick methods like body movements, breathing and visualisation are useful for helping children learn how to calm down.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Provide children with step-by-step strategies to calm themselves down e.g. the turtle technique
- Use visual prompts like posters, cards and puppets to introduce and reinforce the calming down strategies and help children remember the different steps
- Provide opportunities for children to practise calming down strategies through the use of role play, and once familiar, prompting in the moment

### Inspiring Ideas

- The Turtle Technique. Step 1: Recognise your feelings *"I feel angry!"* Step 2: Stop your body. Step 3: Tuck inside your 'shell'; take three deep breaths to calm down and think calm thoughts *"I can do it. I can calm down."* Step 4: Come out when you are feeling calm and think of a solution.
- Belly breathing. With hands gently rested on their tummies, ask children to breathe in slowly through their nose and out through their mouth, feeling their tummy gently rise and fall.
- Animal yoga. Animal poses can help children focus on their body and breath when their minds feel busy. *"Slowly move your arms up and down as if you were an eagle."* *"Pretend you are a cat sneaking up on a mouse."*
- Visualise a safe place. Help children visualise a safe and calm space when emotions are strong. *"Imagine you are floating high in the sky on a white and fluffy cloud. As you breathe in, imagine your body sinking deeper into the soft cloud."*
- Let's Talk! *"Can you tell me about a time you felt worried/angry/scared? What did you do to calm down? What are the other things you could do to calm down next time you feel this way?"*

#### Tip

Introduce strategies when children are feeling calm and settled so they become familiar with what they need to do. Prompt familiar strategies when they experience strong emotions.

#### Tip

Remind children to notice how their bodies feel, and to focus on their breathing.



## REGULATING EMOTIONS

### Generating, choosing and implementing solutions to cope with strong emotions

Children can benefit from support in identifying solutions to resolve the situation, choosing the best solution and implementing it. It is easier for children to think of helpful solutions if they are feeling calm. Generating solutions is the final step in the *Turtle Technique*.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss how children can generate solutions to issues that might cause them to feel strong emotions. Support these discussions with visual tools and demonstrations
- Provide opportunities and games to discuss and make positive behaviour choices, such as acting out day-to-day problems with puppets

#### Inspiring Ideas

- A puppet shows strong, familiar emotions: *"It's raining outside so I can't use my new bicycle!" "I want pizza for my dinner, not pasta"*. Talk about what the puppet can do after calming down to resolve the situation and feel better.
- Stop, Think and Choose! Use a cuddly toy to show children how to choose a positive behaviour after calming down from strong emotions. *"We STOP what we're doing, we THINK about how we feel and what we can do, then we CHOOSE what we can do to feel better!"*
- Let's Talk! *"What do you do to cheer yourself up when you feel sad? I like to hug a cuddly toy, talk about my feelings with someone I trust or distract myself by doing something that makes me happy. How about you?"*
- Thumbs up! Thumbs down! Describe a challenging situation and children decide which solutions make them and others feel better. *"You are trying to put your coat on, but your zip has got stuck... You throw your coat on the floor. Thumbs up or down? You ask an adult for help. Thumbs up or down?"*

#### Tip

Emphasise that it is okay to feel uncomfortable feelings like anger or sadness. It helps to try and find solutions and make positive choices.

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
INTRODUCTION  
TO THIS SERIES

Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

What do we  
mean by  
communicating  
with others

We use our communication skills as tools to interact with other people. Children need to be able to use both verbal and non-verbal communication including speech, gesture, facial expression and body language in order to communicate with others. Children learn these skills in a variety of social contexts.

Why is it  
important

Learning how to talk to and listen to others and how to engage in conversation helps to build and strengthen our relationships with others. Being able to communicate with others also facilitates learning and the exchange of information with others.

## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

### Communicating non-verbally

Children benefit from understanding that we can communicate with others both verbally (through speech) and non-verbally. Different types of non-verbal communication, such as eye-contact, facial expressions and gestures, can be used in different situations. Practicing non-verbal communication in groups and in pairs helps children understand and learn how to use non-verbal communication in appropriate ways.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to use non-verbal communication
- Discuss how to use non-verbal communication in different situations

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Act out gestures that can give us information without saying a word. Wave to say hello, shake your head no, give a thumbs up to say 'Brilliant job!' Have children guess the gesture's meaning. *"See, I didn't have to use words for you to know what I meant!"*
- Welcome to our house, quiet mouse! Have children practice greeting others without saying a word by walking around the room giving high fives, smiling and waving to their friends very quietly!
- Share a smile! Encourage children to share a smile and then ask them how it makes them feel. *"Can you share a smile with someone to make them feel happy today? How does sharing a smile make you feel?"*

#### Tip

Throughout the day, encourage children to look at others when speaking to them (if they feel comfortable doing so) and to listen carefully when others are speaking.

#### Tip

Praise children when they use smiles, nods or eye contact during interactions and conversations with others. It can be useful for children to practice these skills in pairs.

#### Tip

Encourage children to use a brave voice, smile and make themselves big when talking to others.

### Engaging in conversation

Children learn the rules of conversation (turn taking, active listening, responding to questions, eye contact) through warm, engaging interactions. These interactions can take place naturally throughout the day (e.g. when role playing, working on a task, during circle time).

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Encourage interesting conversations among children as a whole group, smaller groups or pairs
- Give children lots of opportunities to practice conversation during everyday activities such as arts and crafts projects

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Shop Talk! Engage children in shop role play which supports lots of back-and-forth interactions. Help to extend their conversation and direct them back to talking child-to-child. *“Why don’t you ask your customer how expensive this is?”*
- Book club! When reading a book to children, have them pair up and ask each other questions about the story, taking turns to listen carefully to each other’s answer. *“Who was your favourite character?”* Children can expand the conversation by asking follow-up questions, for example: *“Why are they your favourite character?”*

#### Tip

Encourage children to engage in conversation with each other during everyday activities, for example, when playing pretend games with friends or describing the world around them. Support children to listen carefully to each other and take turns when speaking.

### Listening

Active listening is an important part of good communication. It involves showing you are listening, giving the speaker your attention, and hearing what they are saying before speaking. Demonstrating active listening skills when engaging with children is an essential first step. It also helps to provide opportunities for children to practice active listening with a variety of other people (not just the adults around them) on a regular basis.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how to listen carefully
- Use role-play activities to provide opportunities to develop listening skills in serve and return conversations
- Use physical activities to reinforce listening skills. Ask children to listen to instructions to move in a certain way, then show you they have listened carefully by making those movements

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Simon Says! When playing 'Simon Says' have children show they are listening carefully by asking them to shout the action back to you as well as moving: *"Simon Says CLAP!" "CLAP!" "Simon Says JUMP!" "JUMP!"* Children can take turns giving and receiving directions.
- Nature Noises! When playing or walking outside, have children listen carefully and point out the noises in nature! *"Eyes watching! Ears listening! Voice quiet! Body calm!"*
- One talking, all listening! To practice listening in group conversations, children can try using a 'One talking, All listening' stick/ball/object. When one child holds the stick and talks, the other children must listen carefully until it's their turn.

#### Tip

**Show children what active listening looks like, by facing the person who is speaking, maintaining good eye contact, nodding to show you are understanding what they are saying, and smiling!**

### Greeting others and introducing yourself

Learning how to greet others and introduce yourself can help children to feel more confident in initiating social interactions. Children benefit from discussions and activities about introducing themselves and greeting others in a variety of situations.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how to greet others and introduce ourselves
- Have children role play greeting each other and introducing themselves
- Remind children how to greet others through the use of songs, books and poems

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When greeting a child with big smiles, eye contact and *“Good morning!”*, model how you would introduce yourself: *“I’m [name], I’m [age]. What’s your name? How old are you?”*
- To welcome children, go around the group and have children say their own name, warmly supporting children who feel a little less confident. After a child has introduced themselves, the whole group can chant: *“Hello [name], it’s nice to see you today! YAY!”*
- Children can pick a new or special friend to introduce themselves to. *“Hi, my name is [name]. What’s your name?”* adding *“What would you like to play today?”*

#### Tip

**Don’t worry if some children feel uncomfortable using eye contact when introducing themselves - children can be friendly in lots of different ways!**



## COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

### Using polite language

Another important aspect of good communication skills is the use of polite language to express gratitude ("Thank you"), make requests ("Please can I..."), solve conflict situations, greet others and give compliments ("I like the way you...").

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate how to use polite language in everyday conversations with children
- Display picture cards on the wall which demonstrate children using polite language as a reminder of how to use polite language in everyday scenarios
- Role-play activities to help children practice using polite language

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Set-up a role-play situation which involves a bus driver taking children to school. Children practice saying "thank you" to express their gratitude as they get off the bus.
- Please pass game! Children see how quickly they can pass a beanbag around the circle. Before their neighbour passes it to them, children say "Please pass the beanbag" in a respectful voice and afterwards say "Thank you!" As children become familiar with the game, introduce new objects and words "Please pass the big, blue teddy."
- Have a puppet act out asking for a snack using polite language "Please may I have a banana?" Support each child to practice asking for a snack of their choice using polite language with lots of praise for a job politely done!

# Early Years Library

READ THE  
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Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## WORKING TOGETHER

What do  
we mean  
by working  
together

As children grow, they develop more of an awareness of others and learn to care more about other people. As part of this, they learn that their words and actions affect others, for example, when sharing their toy or passing a ball. Children benefit from having opportunities to learn about and practise cooperating with others throughout the day.

Why is it  
important

Working together helps to support the development of children's cooperation skills. These skills help to build trust, empathy and a sense of belonging. Providing opportunities for children to share, take turns and work together as a team helps them to form healthy relationships and a sense of being part of a social group.

### Sharing and taking turns

Learning to share and take turns is part of playing cooperatively with others. It also teaches children about compromise and fairness. Children learn a lot from watching what adults do so it helps to demonstrate turn-taking and sharing with others throughout the day. Children need opportunities to practise this skill, for example, through arts and crafts activities.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce the concept of sharing and taking turns using puppets
- Roleplay scenarios with set roles (e.g. shop keeper and customer)
- Play boardgames and encourage children to take turns

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Puppet Role Play! Show two puppets playing together. Scenario 1: the puppet is not sharing their toys with the other puppet. Scenario 2: the puppet shares their toys with the other puppet. Discuss what is happening in both scenarios and how the puppets might feel.
- If children have difficulty sharing toys/ books/materials, use a timer to measure fair turns, giving children lots of praise when they pass the object to the next child!
- Arts and Crafts! Give a group of children a limited amount of arts and crafts material. Let them know why you have given them fewer resources. Support children in sharing the materials and taking turns if necessary.

#### Tip

Notice and praise children when they share and take turns throughout the day.

### Team work

Providing opportunities for children to work together as a team helps them to learn how to cooperate and work towards a common goal. By working together, children learn to express their needs and desires as well as hearing and respecting the needs and desires of others.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Show children how to work with others
- Use art and craft projects and games to encourage discussion and team work
- Discuss how children feel when they work well with others

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Team work! In pairs or small groups, children share, take turns, chat and cooperate to build the tallest tower they can! How tall can it get before it falls?
- Making faces! While one child draws or sticks the eyes onto a face, their partner waits patiently to add the nose, before then taking turns to add the mouth, ears and other details, working alongside each other to create a team face!
- Frog friends! Children hop like frogs to music and then they must find a lily pad (e.g. a hoop or mat) to jump on when the music stops. With each round, remove a lily pad and encourage children to work together to make sure all the frogs are safe!

#### Tip

It might be easier for some children to work in pairs than in groups. As children develop their cooperation skills, they can practise working in small groups of two, three and four children to encourage more discussion and compromise.

### Being helpful

Children are never too young to learn the joy of helping others and being helpful at home and in their early years setting. Children benefit from discussing the different ways they can help others at school and at home. Practicing helping others throughout the day encourages kindness.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce different ways of helping through discussion and use of books and songs
- Role play to practise helping behaviours
- Use visual tools, such as a 'Ways to be Helpful' poster

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Superheroes! Children pretend to be a superhero and make themselves as big as they can by stretching as far as they can! *"How can you help others when you are a superhero?"*
- Let's Talk! *"You are so helpful today! What sort of things do you help with in your house? How do you feel when you help your family? Can you think of any other ways you can be helpful at home?"*
- A teddy visits children but doesn't know their way around! Children can helpfully show teddy their important places. *"You are all being so helpful to teddy! When everyone helps this is a very happy place to be!"*
- Tidy Up Rhyme Time! Children can practice helping by tidying up their toys while singing a helping song or saying a rhyme. *"1,2,3, who are we? We are tidy friends, can't you see? Helping others, having fun! Tidy friends, tidy friends, we're number 1!"*

### Asking for help

It is important for children to know how to confidently ask for help. By giving children the phrases they could use to ask for help, and helping them identify who they might turn to for help, children will feel more secure in their ability to seek help when needed.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use books and songs to start discussions about how different people can help us
- Use role play and games to practise asking for help

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When a child needs help, for instance when zipping up their coat, playing on a swing or reaching to put the last block on top of a tower, prompt them to ask another child or an adult: *“Can you help me, please?”*
- When reading or telling a story, encourage children to think about who they could ask for help. *“This is a predicament! Who would you ask for help if this happened to you? That’s a great idea!”*
- Support Team! Each child gives a sticker to people who they think are part of their support team, like friends, teachers and teaching assistants and tell them what makes them brilliant helpers! *“Our support team is a team of brilliant people who help us through lots of different bits of our lives... Who is part of your support team at home?”*



# Early Years Library

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Part of the **Social and Emotional Learning** Series

## DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

What do  
we mean by  
developing  
positive  
relationships

Knowing how to make and keep positive relationships allows children to form strong bonds with others. For younger children, this starts with caregivers and trusted adults and, as children get older, their relationships expand to other family members and friends. As they grow, children learn how to approach people, communicate with them kindly and make new friends.

Why is it  
important

Building positive relationships is at the heart of early childhood education. Developing positive relationships with others helps children to discover who they are, to understand others and to enjoy new experiences.

### Developing friendships

Children of all ages, in particular those around preschool age, build skills that help them to develop friendships. These skills can include learning to share, taking turns, and understanding things from another person's point of view. Through practicing these skills and having discussions about friendships, children develop an understanding of how they can be a good friend and the steps they might need to take to make new friends.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Discuss and use puppets to reflect on what makes a good friend
- Use visual tools like stickers and posters to support children to practice making and keeping friends

#### Inspiring Ideas

- When reading or telling a story, ask: *"Who are [character]'s friends? Who are your friends? Why are they such good friends? How can you be a good friend? That's so important!"*
- When you notice children helping, sharing or playing together well say: *"You are such good friends! It's lovely to have friends! Why don't we see if anybody else would like to be good friends today?"*
- Freeze! In pairs, children balance an object on their head (for instance a soft toy, tissue or leaf, perhaps). When it falls off, they are magically frozen! They can only unfreeze when a friend heroically comes to the rescue!

### Giving compliments and using kind words

Having the ability to give compliments and say something kind about another person is an important social skill. Children benefit from seeing others giving and receiving compliments and having discussions with their friends about how and when they might give compliments. Providing opportunities to practice using kind words is important.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Demonstrate and discuss how children can praise others
- Use visual tools, such as posters, to help children practice using kind words

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Support children to decide which words are compliments, and which are not, by asking, for example: *"Which is a compliment: 'that's a picture' or 'that's a WONDERFUL picture'?"*
- Give compliments freely to children and other adults during the day. When you receive a compliment, point it out to children. *"What a lovely compliment. Those kind words have made me feel really happy!"* Children can then practise giving compliments using dolls, puppets and small world resources. *"Oh pirate! You are excellent at finding treasure." "Thank you, elephant, I know I am!"*
- When a child produces artwork, writes or builds something, prompt other children to compliment their work. *"What a fantastic castle! You've worked so hard on that! What's everyone's favourite part?"*
- In a circle, children spin an arrow or roll a ball and give a compliment to whoever it lands on! Help children to focus on other children's best qualities by giving examples. *"I like the way you play with me/help me/share with me."*

#### Tip

Focus compliments on why someone is nice and friendly, rather than on their appearance and belongings. This keeps everyone feeling included and valued, which supports positive relationships.

### Valuing similarities and differences

Being able to recognise similarities and differences between people helps children value diversity and inclusion. Children can celebrate their unique qualities by exploring each other's likes and dislikes, and learn to understand that families all over the world are both similar and different.

#### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Introduce and discuss how we are all both similar and different
- Use photos of different cultures, books and songs to help children explore and appreciate similarities and differences

#### Inspiring Ideas

- Let's Talk! To celebrate each family member's unique qualities, ask: *"Who smiles the most in your family? Who is the funniest? Who is the sleepest? Who helps the most?"*
- At snack time have children make a fruit kebab. Point out everyone's unique and tasty patterns! Be excited about what children eat with their families and discuss how different families eat different delicious snacks.
- When reading or telling a story, discuss the similarities and differences between the characters and children. *"Do you have brothers and sisters like this character? Do you have a pink sofa? Would you like ice cream for dinner too?"*
- With arts and craft materials sorted into groups, encourage children to make their own piece of art. Talk to children about how each piece of art is wonderfully different, even though they are all made from the same materials!

# DEVELOPING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

## Being kind and caring

The ability to act kindly and compassionately is an important part of developing positive relationships. Children benefit from having discussions with their friends about what 'being kind' means to them and opportunities to practice acts of kindness towards others.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- When you read a story, ask children how the characters are kind to each other
- Using visual tools such as posters or picture cards, discuss with children the different ways they can be kind to others and show that they care about their friends

### Inspiring Ideas

- During the day, encourage children to be kind when other children are shy, upset, hurt or need help. *"Can you see that the baby is crying? What can we do to look after the baby? That's so kind!" "I think your friend is feeling a bit shy today, how can we be caring and help?"*
- Let's Talk! *"What kind thing can you do today to make someone feel happy? How do you feel when you are being kind?"*
- Caring Cards! Have children make cards for someone's birthday, or someone who is ill or might have been upset. *"I bet seeing this card will make them feel happy! You are so kind!"*

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## RESOLVING CONFLICT

What do we  
mean by  
resolving  
conflict

Children can learn practical skills to manage conflict in a healthy way. Dealing with conflict builds on children's communication skills (listening to others and expressing their own needs in a respectful way), empathy (putting themselves in someone else's shoes) and problem-solving. It can be difficult to resolve conflict when emotions are strong, so children should be supported to regulate their emotions first.

Why is it  
important

Quarrels and disagreements are normal in any relationship — for adults and for children. Learning how to deal with conflict helps children navigate squabbles and equips them with strategies to deal with bigger conflicts as they get older. Children develop confidence in their abilities when they see the positive impact of their problem-solving skills.



## Speaking up during conflict

Provide children with the words to assert themselves and express what they want or need when they find themselves in a conflict situation. Children can practice using phrases that will help them to express their needs when a conflict arises.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use a puppet to show how to speak up during conflicts and prompt discussions about conflict
- Use stories to discuss conflict situations, exploring how characters feel and what a character might say to address the conflict situation

### Inspiring Ideas

- Use puppets to model a phrase children might use when they find themselves in conflict with someone else. *"Stop! I don't like that."* Support children to practice saying this phrase assertively so that they have a simple method of dealing with conflict. *"Well done for telling your friend about your feelings."*
- Act out a puppet or cuddly toy taking a ball from a child and have children practice speaking up assertively. *"I didn't like it when you took my ball. Please can I have it back?"*
- When children find themselves in a conflict situation, support them to identify how they are feeling. For example: *"I feel sad because I am being left out of their game."* Gently encourage them to speak up: *"I'd like to join in with your game, please."*

#### Tip

Provide phrases that are easy to remember when they find themselves in a conflict situation.

#### Tip

Reinforce appropriate ways to speak up during conflict: *"Well done, you have said what you want in a strong and respectful way."*

# RESOLVING CONFLICT

## Finding solutions for conflict

Support children to identify different ways to solve conflicts and decide on the most appropriate solution. This might include learning how and when it is appropriate to accept when something may be their fault and how to say sorry.

### Most commonly used strategies in evidence-based manuals:

- Use pictures representing conflict situations and ask children to identify what is happening, brainstorm different solutions and choose the best one.
- Discuss what it means to say “it was an accident”, why it is important to admit a mistake, to tell the truth and how to apologise.
- Use stories to discuss how children would feel before and after resolving the conflict

### Inspiring Ideas

- Show a puppet in a common conflict situation: *“Someone else is playing with my favourite toy!”; “They pushed in front of me while I was waiting for my snack!”* Talk about the different actions the puppet could take to resolve the situation and the pros and cons of each idea. As a group, decide what the puppet should do next.
- Tell a story of an everyday accident, and ask children how everyone might have felt. *“What happened? Was it an accident? How do you think everyone felt?”* Brainstorm ideas for helping people to feel better, for example, *“It was an accident, I’m sorry.”*
- Let’s Talk! *“Can you think of a time when someone has been unkind to you? What did you do? Can you think of another way to solve the problem? One way to solve the problem could be to ask for help.”*
- When two children begin to disagree, support them to think of different ways to solve the conflict and to put one of the solutions into practice. *“We could combine our building blocks to make an even taller tower!”; “We can take turns playing with the new doll.”*

#### Tip

Provide children with opportunities to practice finding solutions when they are not part of the conflict (with role play and puppets) before encouraging them to practice it in real life.

#### Tip

Encourage children to think of a solution instead of you doing it for them. *“Let’s put on our thinking caps and figure out together what we can do to solve this problem.”*

#### Tip

Let children hear you saying sorry and explaining what you are sorry for to help them understand how and when they might apologise.

# Early Years Library

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## Laying the foundations: Supporting children's self-regulation



## What is self-regulation?

Self-regulation enables children to adjust to new situations, reflect on and adapt their behaviours, focus their attention, remember instructions, and plan how to approach tasks successfully. Self-regulation develops rapidly in early childhood, especially during the years before children start formal school. Along with other skills like engagement, persistence and self-confidence, self-regulation supports children's lifelong learning and development in a range of areas from literacy and numeracy to friendships and even healthy living.

Children practise and refine their self-regulation skills in everyday activities such as doing puzzles (e.g. working memory helps to imagine turning a shape around in your mind), language activities (e.g. talking while playing to plan what will happen next), early literacy activities (e.g. flexibly moving between strategies for writing), and social activities (e.g. taking turns). These skills are also practised during traditional games like freeze games (e.g. where children have to think about what they are doing, instead of being impulsive).

In this evidence-informed guidance, we describe what adults can do to support five areas of self-regulation:





## How can adults support children's self-regulation?

Children's self-regulation develops throughout everyday activities when they experience a 'just right' level of challenge in a supportive and positive learning environment. As a practitioner, you might recognise there are many activities already present in your setting that stretch children's self-regulation (e.g. songs that switch between fast and slow; children being responsible for clearing the table after lunch). Having 'just enough' scaffolding, not too much and not too little, helps children build self-regulation, for example gentle support like cues for remembering multi-step instructions, or prompts for sharing and taking turns.

Research shows that each child develops in a unique way, rather than following a strictly linear pre-defined route through development in a specific order or timeframe. Practitioners can use their professional judgement to gauge which elements of these skills a child may benefit from focusing on at different times.

Children's self-regulation also benefits from some unstructured time. Allowing children to play independently, without adult involvement, makes space for them to work through challenges and find their own solutions when things are tricky.



## Supporting self-regulation in everyday practice

### Being adaptable and flexible

Support children to be adaptable and flexible learners by providing opportunities for them to think of different ways to approach tasks, consider problems from different perspectives, and be flexible and embrace changes in situations and routines.

As part of being an adaptable and flexible learner children can: think of new ideas to solve problems; attempt to complete tasks in a number of different ways; coordinate with peers; and keep trying different ways when their attempt was not successful.

- **Make sure children have easy access to materials that might help them to solve problems such as tape, glue, sticks, scissors, rope or string. Being adaptable and flexible helps children work through difficulties on their own or with the help of an adult or a peer, and supports them to problem solve in tasks and social situations.**
- **During every day practice, look out for opportunities for children to brainstorm different solutions to problems (e.g., I lost my jumper, we both want the same toy, a ball is stuck in a tree).**
- **When completing puzzles, building towers, or making train tracks, encourage children to think about what might happen if they put pieces in different places, or what happens if they don't have the piece they need.**
- **Support children to do things in different ways. For instance, ask children to think of different ways to show '5' with their fingers, or to build different types of bridges from blocks and other materials.**

### Having some control over behaviours and reactions

Support children to learn how to control their behaviours and to stop or delay automatic and impulsive reactions. As part of being able to control behaviours and reactions, children can: control their focus and attention to complete a task, for example they are able to stay on task despite having distractions in their environment; control their behavioural responses, such as not interrupting during a conversation and taking turns; and control their motor responses, such as staying seated during circle time.

- **Play games that require children to focus their attention and inhibit or delay a response, for example 'Simon Says' or freeze games.**
- **Embed opportunities for children to practise behavioural and motor impulse control within day-to-day activities. For example, show a numeral or hold up a number of fingers and ask children to jump or clap exactly that many times and then stop.**
- **Embed opportunities for children to take turns in pairs or groups, for instance, while reading a story or counting out loud in turn.**
- **Use transitions between activities as an opportunity for children to practise inhibiting their behaviour. For example, at the end of the activity, ask children to stop what they are doing at the end of a countdown.**



### Holding information in mind while doing a task (working memory)

Supporting children's working memory (holding verbal and visual information in mind while doing a task) can involve giving small cues and reminders, and slowly building tasks up as children's abilities develop. Note, working memory is more than just remembering. It goes beyond straight memorisation and involves actively doing something with the information.

For example working memory is involved in: sequencing the steps in a story that have been mixed up in order; mentally visualising blocks to fit them together; following instructions that have an increasing number of steps at tidy-up time.

- **Embed opportunities for children to process information when reading a story, for example asking children to act out the events while remembering their order: "And then what happens?"**
- **Embed games in your everyday practice. For example, place items on a tray (e.g. different shapes, feeling cards), give children 20-30 seconds to study the tray and ask them to cover their eyes. Remove some items and ask children to shout out which items have been taken away.**
- **Promote the development of working memory by giving children a short set of instructions (and build a longer list for those with bigger working memory capacity). It can help to model 'thinking out loud' about what they are doing.**

### Planning ahead independently

Support children to plan ahead independently by encouraging them to make decisions about their work, identify steps to achieve their goals, and organise their actions in an intentional way. They may not always have the answers, but as their self-regulation develops, they will build on this foundation for talking about their learning.

- **During daily activities, embed opportunities to discuss with children what they are planning to complete a task and reflect on how it went afterwards. For example, ask them how they figured out what card comes next when putting the cards in order, or what they were really good at during a baking activity and what they found most tricky.**
- **Talk about step-by-step plans in everyday practice, such steps we can follow when meeting new friends.**
- **When children make a mistake (for instance making an addition error or incorrectly naming a character in a story), help them to try again and reflect on how to complete the task.**
- **During the day, announce changes from one activity to another, or build a routine with a tidy up song. For instance, 5 minutes before a transition, you might announce that children will soon need to put away their activities or play the song as a cue for children to get ready.**

### Being mindful of experiences in the moment

Support children to be mindful of experience in the moment by helping children to tune into their bodily sensations, how they feel on the inside, and their five senses during everyday activities. For example, children can focus on their breathing; recognise when their voices are quiet and loud; notice how different toys and materials feel; and move in a space with awareness of their own bodies and others around them.

- Encourage children to think about using quiet inside voices, compared to loud outside voices when they are in the playground or park. Compare this to drum sounds and how it feels when the drum is played too loud.
- Model active listening poses and active watching actions for children (such as pulling their earlobes or holding their hands like binoculars) so they can show you when they are paying attention and ready to listen and learn.
- Encourage children to be different animals during role play, freezing and changing animals if they hear a bell. Discuss with children how it felt to be these different animals.
- When walking around the park or in the playground, draw children's attention to the sounds they can hear and ask if they can see where the sound is coming from.



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