

Learning from home



If your family is spending additional time around the home, it's useful to engage in fun educational activities with your children. Below you'll find some information about the benefits of play-based learning to your child's development and their readiness for school. We've also included examples of play-based activities you can engage in with your child at home.

We understand that learning in the home is different to learning at an early childhood education service. Where possible you should maintain a connection with your service and carers who may be able to provide additional assistance and support.

What is play-based learning?

Children are naturally curious about the world around them. They experience and come to understand the world and their place in it through play. Creating opportunities for children to explore, experiment, question and discover new concepts about the world in playful ways is central to their learning, development and wellbeing.

In play-based learning, children engage with the people, places and objects around them to form their understanding of the world and how they fit into it. Play-based learning is an important way of developing children's knowledge and skills, and preparing them for a lifetime of learning both in school and beyond.

How does play-based learning benefit my child?

Play-based learning has a powerful impact on children's early cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. Play-based learning that is child-led and fun can help children to:

- Become autonomous learners
- Develop a lifelong passion for learning
- Develop numeracy and literacy skills

- Develop fine and gross motor skills
- Develop language skills and vocabulary
- Develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Build confidence and social skills
- Foster creativity and imagination
- Develop emotional maturity

Play-based learning doesn't need to happen in formal settings like pre-school for children to get the benefits. Children's early years are often spent mostly at home, which means that families and caregivers are children's earliest teachers. Families can support children's learning and development by creating opportunities for play in the home.

Play can happen both indoors and outdoors. You don't need expensive toys or equipment. Play-based learning can build on everyday activities in the home and make use of common household items. Cardboard rolls and boxes, plastic cups and buckets, wooden spoons, food packaging, old clothes and pots and pans are just some of the items you can use. Feel free to get creative!

Ideas for play-based learning in the home

Playing with Babies

- Reading, talking, telling stories and singing to your baby will help them learn about language, words, and sounds.
- Tummy time strengthens your baby's head, neck and upper body muscles. This will help them develop movement control. Try to do supervised tummy time every day.
- Toys and objects in different shapes, textures, colours and sizes can help your baby reach and grasp. Soft blocks, balls, stuffed toys and plastic rings are good options.
- Listening to music can help your baby's hearing development. Try listening to nursery rhymes together or make your own music with items around the home. Plastic bottles filled with rice make fun shakers and you can use wooden spoons and pots and pans to make drums.
- Sitting your baby near sturdy furniture can encourage them to pull themselves up and stand. You can encourage crawling by making tunnels out of cardboard boxes or chairs.

Playing with Toddlers

- Making collages with paper, scissors, and glue can help your toddler develop fine motor skills and use their creativity. You can use scraps of paper or fabric, dried pasta or cereal, tin foil, pipe-cleaners, ice-cream sticks, buttons or even natural items like feathers, sand and leaves.
- Building blanket forts or cubby houses in the home will encourage your toddler to use their imagination and solve problems. You can make a blanket fort by hanging a blanket over a table. Large cardboard boxes can be used for cubbyhouses, with holes cut out for windows and doors. You can paint and decorate the cubbyhouse together as a fun activity.
- Sports equipment like balls, rope and hoops encourage throwing, catching, jumping, running and stretching. This develops your toddler's gross motor skills.
- Listening to family-friendly music and radio is an enjoyable way of increasing language and communication skills. Music and rhyme can increase pattern recognition and dancing is a creative way to help your child express feelings and ideas. This can help foster their social and emotional development.

Playing with Preschoolers

- Playing games like dress-up, make-believe, hide and seek or I Spy engages your child's imagination and creativity.
- Playing with sensory materials like playdough can develop your child's fine motor skills. Playdough can be bought or made at home. Consider using shape, alphabet and number cookie cutters to build literacy and numeracy skills. You can also add textured materials like beads, buttons and pasta shells to playdough to encourage sensory exploration.
- Playing board games and sorting puzzles will help children learn to think critically and solve problems.
- Doing simple household tasks together like cooking, gardening, hanging up washing and tidying up messes can teach children about teamwork and build their confidence.
- Building obstacle courses in the house or yard supports both fine and gross motor skills. Make obstacles using empty cardboard boxes, jump rope or cord, small ladders, hoops, cones and more to encourage movements like running, jumping, stepping, climbing, and hopping. This helps overall physical fitness and coordination.
- Reaching out to family and friends by video or phone call can foster social, communication and language skills. This sort of playful interaction can teach children how to get along with adults and other children.

These are just some of the activities you and your child can do together. The most important thing is for you and your child to spend quality time together, talking, exploring, laughing and having fun.

Remember that children aged 1 – 5 need **three to four hours** of play every day. Play activities should be spread throughout the day.

For more information contact your child's service or the Early Childhood Education Directorate on **1800 619 113** or ececd@det.nsw.edu.au