



# Your child's learning, development and care: birth to five



# Making the most of time with your child

Every mum and dad wants the best for their child. You're the most important people in their life and crucial to their wellbeing. Your listening, understanding, playing and love are very important.

Learning happens all the time for babies and young children. And they've got a lot to learn from mums, dads and other caring and trusted adults, as well as from each other. You can help your child develop the skills and confidence that will benefit them throughout their life.

This booklet has some ideas about how you can support your baby or young child as they grow, so you can make the most of your time with them and support their development. There are examples of what you can do with babies and examples of activities with older children. You'll be able to choose the activities you think are right for your child.

**Remember the things you do make the biggest difference to your child getting the best possible start in life.**



# The important role of mums and dads

## Did you know?

- When you're cuddling your young child, you're building a bond and helping them feel safe and secure. This will help them to develop other relationships, both as a child and later in life.
- Sitting down and sharing books, whatever your child's age, is a great way to spend time together. They feel safe and secure sitting by your side and they will be picking up a lot of the language you read to them.
- Encouraging your child to try new things helps them gain confidence and find out what they're capable of doing.
- When you praise your young child, you're showing them you believe in them and are pleased with what they've done. This builds their confidence and is a much more effective way of improving their behaviour than telling them off.

- Children learn from mistakes. They do learn to judge risks with help from adults, but when they try new things for themselves they find out about possible dangers and learn how to protect themselves from harm.

## What about

Joining in with your child's play? Children learn the most when they're playing, when they're interested and having fun. You could look at what they've chosen to play with and talk about the different things you notice about their toys. They'll be all ears – learning language and loving spending time with you.



## Here are some things you can look for to see your child's development moving on...

### It's good to talk together

Babies react to people and sounds around them right from the start. They look about, listen, watch and react to the things around them, and communicate with people they see. By talking to them about their lives and the things around them, their understanding and their close relationship with you will grow.

### It's good to explore

Babies and young children want to explore their environment as much as they can. Being better at getting around and developing their language means they can find out and understand more about their world. By taking them outside, letting them explore and talking about the things you find together, even before they can talk, their knowledge of the world will grow.



**Remember all children grow and learn at their own pace.  
Even brothers and sisters are unique in the way they develop.**

### **It's good to meet others**

Toddlers start to become more independent and enjoy moving about more freely and communicating.

They're learning through play and developing problem solving skills. Giving your child the chance to meet and play with other children helps them become confident around others and they will learn a lot from the things other children do.

### **It's good to feel secure**

As young children grow, they become more able to get around, talk and pretend. They show more self-confidence. From their close relationship with you, they can go on to make good friends with other people. If your child feels a secure attachment to you, they will feel comfortable meeting other people and exploring different activities and surroundings when they're away from you, knowing you'll return.



### **It's good to learn through play**

Children are learning rapidly and know how they want to tackle things. They can work with a wide range of activities and with a wide range of people as their social skills improve. Allowing your child to follow their interests and showing you are interested by asking questions, you are helping them to learn through play and get ready to start school.

## Enjoying talking and listening together

### Did you know?

- When you spend time talking and listening to your baby or young child – about where they sleep, where they live, the noises they hear, the things they see – you're also developing their ability to listen to you and respond.
- If you take time to stop and look, it gives your child the chance to show you things they've seen and tell you what's important to them.
- Listening to your child and allowing them time to speak without interruption helps them develop their confidence in talking with you and with others.

### What about

Playing a game of copycat with your baby or toddler. If you poke your tongue out at them they'll copy you. When they make a sound and you repeat it, watch their reaction. They're learning how to have a conversation, even before they can talk.

## Health and wellbeing

### Did you know?

- Letting your child express their frustration or anger is important. Listening, understanding and responding to their needs helps them learn how to handle their feelings.
- Explaining why toys need to be put away or kept in one area helps them understand safety and think of others.
- Talking to your child about which foods are good for them – and letting them make their own healthy choices – helps them become independent and healthy.

### What about

Making a picnic together? It could be in the garden, in the park, in your living room, even in your child's bedroom. Choose some fresh foods together and talk about why you're choosing them. Your child will be learning to combine healthy eating with pleasure.

## Play is the best way to explore and learn

### Did you know?

- Playing outdoors is essential to children of all ages – being outside means they can experience different temperatures and types of weather, and also make bigger movements and more noise.
- Pretending helps children to develop ideas and stories, and understand things from another person's point of view.
- Children's early play with natural materials helps to develop their understanding of the world around them. Mixing flour and water, seeing ice melt, or helping with cooking are all ways children learn about how liquids and solids change.



### What about

Playing together with different textures like dough, sand or fabric? Every child will enjoy playing and making things with these materials. Let them squeeze it between their fingers and handle it in all sorts of different ways. They'll discover and explore it through their senses and build up their strength, too.

## Six areas in which your child will learn and develop

### Did you know?

Children's learning can be described in six areas. All places you can take your child to learn and be cared for from birth to five – whether nurseries, pre-schools, playgroups, reception classes or childminders – plan activities through play to make sure every child does things they are interested in which cover all these six areas. This helps children grow into well-rounded people.

### These six areas are:

- **Personal, social and emotional learning.**
- **Communication, language and literacy.**
- **Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy.**
- **Knowledge and understanding of the world.**
- **Physical development.**
- **Creative development.**

These six areas make up the Early Years Foundation Stage, or EYFS, the framework nurseries and

childminders use to plan children's activities through play.

As you read through the next few pages, you'll see how these six areas all link together. Your child will often do things which link to more than one area of learning.

**Remember what you already do with your child is helping them learn and develop. Research shows that where mums and dads and nurseries or childminders work together, children are happier and do better. After all, you're their very first teacher and you understand your child better than anyone else.**



## Personal, social and emotional development

### Did you know?

- For children, being special to someone and being well cared for is important for their wellbeing.
- Children who feel free to express their ideas and their feelings can develop new ways to cope with challenging and stressful situations.
- If, when you feel angry or frustrated, you can stay calm and talk to your child about the problem they will feel more secure and relaxed with you.
- Understanding your child's point of view when things aren't going their way – and talking it through with them – helps your child understand their own emotions and those of other people.



### What about

Role play – like playing hospitals or having a teddy bears' tea party – with your child helps them be creative, talk with you and explore ideas.

In a nursery, pre-school or reception class, every child has what's called a **key person**.

A key person is:

- the person who acts as a point of contact with you;
- a person who helps your baby or young child to become familiar with the nursery and feel confident and safe within it;
- a person who meets the needs of each child in their care and responds sensitively to their feelings, ideas and behaviour; and
- a person who takes a careful note of your child's development and progress and shares these ideas with you.

# Communication, language and literacy

## Did you know?

- Children learn lots of words and phrases from reading books with you. You can never start reading with your child too early.
- Children love making and listening to all sorts of sounds. Bit by bit, children listen to stories with more attention and they'll get better at telling stories back to you.
- Children learn best when activities use several senses at once – like touch, taste and hearing. Talk about how things feel (soft, hard, slippery), how they taste (bitter, sweet, salty), how they sound (loud, soft, crackly).
- Talking together about everyday activities – like getting dressed and cooking – helps your child improve their listening and talking skills as they hear the way you describe what you're doing.

- Having magnetic letters at home and playing with them can really help your child understand that letters stand for sounds.

## What about

Having fun with songs, stories and rhymes in the bath and at bedtime. Putting in sound effects – like splashing in the bath – adds to the fun.



## Problem solving, reasoning and numeracy

### Did you know?

- Children love exploring things and organising them.  
It's about:
  - counting things;
  - sorting things;
  - matching things;
  - looking for patterns; and
  - playing with shapes, space and measures.
- Using words like 'more' or 'less', 'bigger' or 'smaller' helps your child learn to compare numbers and the things they see every day.
- Children learn the names of numbers through enjoying rhymes and songs which have numbers in them.
- Talking about what your child is doing when they fill or empty bags or fit shapes into spaces, helps them understand shapes and sizes – and develops their language at the same time.

### What about

Sorting pairs of socks to match patterns, colours and designs.

Singing songs with numbers in – like 'One, two, buckle my shoe. Three, four, knock on the door.' If you don't know the rest, make it up!

Sharing out food to show how things can be shared fairly between everyone.

Finding numbers everywhere – on houses to help people find them, on buses to tell people their route, on car number plates, TV channels and the DVD player.



## Knowledge and understanding of the world

### Did you know?

- At first, children will enjoy exploring things with their mouth and hands and be very interested in things which build up and fall down.
- Children learn best by doing things. After all, it's always easier to understand something if you try it out for yourself.
- Investigating living things you come across – like insects and earthworms, trees and leaves – helps your child understand the world around them.
- Your child will love telling you about what they see as they explore and will seek and play with things to find out what things mean and why things happen.
- Encouraging your child to help you make decisions – like choosing which food to buy or how to make something – also builds their ability to work out what they need and how they can achieve it.

### What about

Using an empty box – like a shoe box – to gather things you find together? Next time you go for a walk or visit a park, talk about the things you see and ask your child to choose something to bring back home. They might be stones, moss, feathers or leaves. When you get home, talk about their colour and texture. Make a label for each one. Your child's skills will be growing in every area.



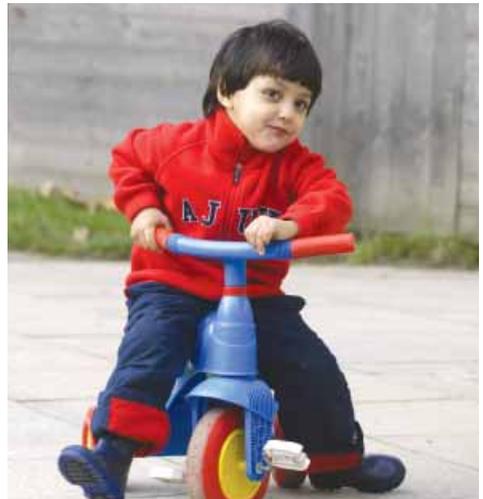
# Physical development

## Did you know?

- Children are learning as they move and use all their senses. They have a natural instinct for using their bodies and using action and sound.
- Crawling, getting in and out of things and moving in all sorts of ways all help children's early brain development as well as their physical strength and co-ordination.
- Suggesting ways to move to music – shuffling, slithering, rolling, crawling, jumping, dancing – develops your child's imagination and physical skills.
- Making a den outside or in, using chairs, a clotheshorse, sheets, a climbing frame – gives your child the chance to balance and climb around, under, over and through.
- Giving your child time to use a range of equipment or build different things means they can try activities over and over again, practice new skills, take risks and learn from their mistakes.

## What about

Setting up an obstacle course together? It's something you can do inside or out and make it as easy or as difficult as you like. You can use things around the house like sheets and tablecloths (to drape over and tunnel under), a broom (to climb over or prop up), a washing up bowl (to sit on, in or climb over), empty boxes (to sit in or tunnel through), chairs (to go over or under).



## Creative development

### Did you know?

- Creativity is something that comes naturally to young children – and grows with encouragement.
- Creativity is important because when children decide on their own activities they become better at working things out for themselves.
- Children need to feel safe enough to take risks when they're expressing themselves.
- Moving to music gives children a chance to see how we use our bodies – expressing emotions like joy or sorrow, or pretending to be objects or creatures such as a tree, a mouse or a bird.
- Dressing up and acting out scenes is a great way to develop creativity. They also help children understand people and situations. You can hang on to a few old clothes, hats, beads, shoes (or visit a jumble or car boot sale).

### What about

Putting on your favourite music, pouring some rice or lentils in a screw top jar, and adding in a sauce pan and a wooden spoon. Now you have music – maracas to shake and a drum to bang.



## Your free entitlement to childcare

Early learning and childcare gives your child a great start in life. It can give your child the chance to make new friends and they can explore and learn in a safe environment which has activities built around their needs.

When you visit a nursery, pre-school, playgroup, reception class or a childminder, why not talk to the staff about what your child will be doing?

### Did you know?

**There's free part-time early learning for all three- and four-year-olds.** Every three- and four-year-old in England is entitled to a minimum of 12.5 hours of free early learning per week, for 38 weeks of the year. Some local authorities offer 15 hours a week and by 2010 all eligible children will be entitled to 15 hours of free early learning a week.

Free places are available in schools, nurseries, pre-schools and playgroups and with childminders in accredited childminder networks.

Your local **Families Information Service** can tell you how and where you can take up the free entitlement in your local area.

To find your local Families Information Service call:  
**0800 2346 346**

Working families may be able to claim the childcare element of the Working Tax Credit to help towards childcare costs.

Call the HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Tax Credit Helpline on 0845 300 3900 (open 8am-8pm seven days a week) or check online at [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk) for a claim form.

When you choose childcare that's Ofsted registered, you'll know it's met clear standards designed to provide a safe and secure environment for your children.





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