



# What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage: *a guide for parents*



# What to expect in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

- The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outlines what adults must do to help children learn and develop and to be healthy and safe.
- This guide is for parents\* of children from birth to five years old. It will help you find out more about your child's learning and development in the EYFS.
- The EYFS includes seven areas of learning and development. In this guide the seven areas are split into three age bands\*\*:
  - *Birth to three*
  - *3-4*
  - *4-5 (the reception year in school)*
- In each band, there are suggestions about what your child may be doing, and how you can help them. It's important to remember that children develop in different ways and at different rates.
- After each age band you will find top tips for fun, playful experiences that you and your child can do together at home.

\*'Parent' is used to mean parents, carers and guardians. \*\*The age bands follow [Development Matters](#), which is the Government's non-statutory guide for all early years practitioners, childminders, staff in nurseries, nursery schools, and nursery and reception classes in school.



## Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage

Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five

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# Seven areas of learning and development in the EYFS

*The **three prime areas** are crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.*



Communication  
and Language



Personal, Social and  
Emotional Development



Physical Development

*The three prime areas are strengthened and applied through the **four specific areas**.*



Literacy



Mathematics



Understanding the World



Expressive Arts and Design



# What happens early, matters for a lifetime

- [Research](#) tells us that what happens at home makes the biggest difference to your child's early learning and development.
- Playing together, singing, enjoying books, visiting the library, painting, drawing and finding out through play about letters, numbers and shapes are important activities to do at home. These activities are learning opportunities.
- These learning activities will make a difference to your child's learning right up to secondary school.

***What parents do is more important than who parents are.***





# What happens early, matters for a lifetime

## Chat, Play, Read

*Giving your child the best start in life.*

- Children love to talk about all sorts of things. Make time to have back and forth conversations.
- Don't feel embarrassed talking to your baby – it's never too soon to start communicating with them!
- Go with what your child is interested in. This will help them learn lot of new words.





# Chat

**The benefits to your child learning more than one language are huge.**

- Talk and play with your child in the language that you feel most comfortable and confident using.
- Sing, read and tell stories in your home language – rhyme and repetition help your child to remember words.
- Home languages give your child a connection to their culture and heritage. Encourage your child to use all their languages – they will feel closer to people and part of their community.





# Play

- Play helps children learn about the world and themselves. Children need time and space to play freely. Sometimes it is helpful if you sensitively join in with your child's play, too.
- Children need outdoor play.
- Play is essential for your child's wellbeing and development. It is part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- There are many everyday moments like bath time and dinner that you can make playful. Help your child to learn in a fun and relaxed way.





# Read

- Sharing books and telling stories is a lovely way to build closeness and encourage conversations.
- Sharing books with your child at a young age will help them to develop a love of reading.
- Read and share stories with your baby.
- Talk to your child about what is happening in the pictures.
- Young children love to hear and read their favourite books and stories again and again.



Have fun together!  
Use silly voices and  
act things out that  
happen in the book.

Even a few  
minutes can make  
a difference.



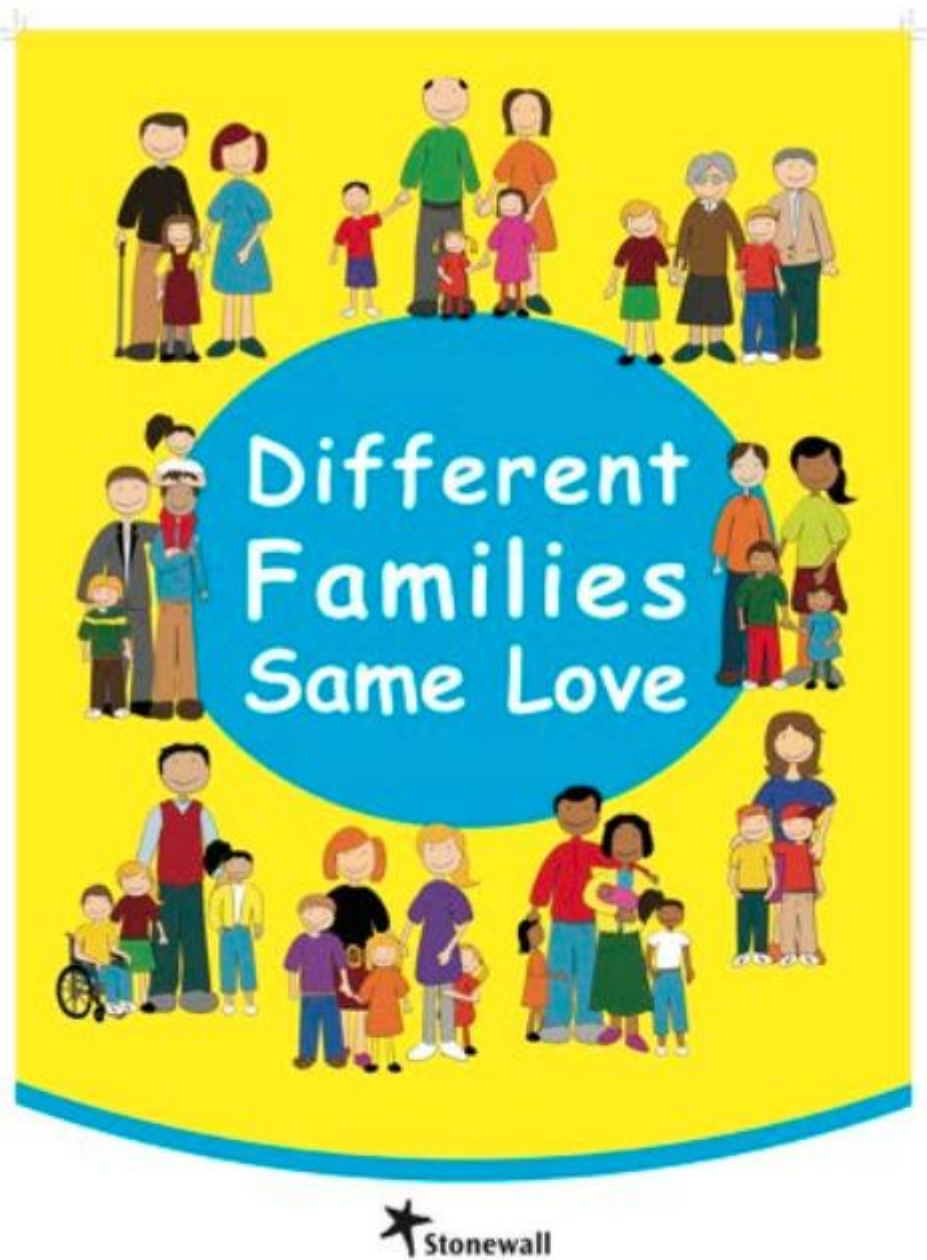
# What happens early, matters for a lifetime

## **Building a brighter, fairer future for all**

- The early years are vital for shaping children's views and attitudes. You can make a difference to how your child sees the world.
- It is important for you to think about your own views and be open to exploring your thinking.
- Boys and girls can do everything! But they are often treated differently, from an early age. Limitations can start early and hold children back.









# What happens early, matters for a lifetime

- Parents of all races, ethnicities and cultures need to work together to understand how harmful racism is to everyone. Talking about race is the first step in challenging racism.
- Helping your child to develop anti-racist attitudes is so important: every child and family should have a sense of belonging irrespective of their race, ethnicity or culture.
- From three months, babies are aware of other races. Children are inquisitive. Your child might notice differences in skin colour or ask questions that make you feel uncomfortable. It is important that your response is calm, positive and well-informed.





# What happens early, matters for a lifetime

## How you can help your child to talk about race:

- Between the ages of birth to three, children are naturally curious about the world around them. Giving your child books and toys that show people from a range of ethnicities positively is so important.
- [From the age of three](#), children start to notice if things aren't shared fairly. They start to show us they don't like this.
- From around the age of five children can talk about unfairness. You can start to have conversations about how unfair things can happen because of the colour of somebody's skin.
- Children of this age love to engage in role play and pretend play. This will help your child to learn about other peoples' ideas, feelings and actions.





# Partnership with parents

The adults who work with your child know a lot about children – but not as much about *your child*. It's important to tell them what they need to know. Then they can understand your child and help them.

- It's important for parents and early years settings to have a strong and respectful partnership.
- A strong, trusting partnership will support two-way communication between you and your child's key person or childminder.
- Throughout the EYFS, settings must share information about your child's progress.





# What to do if you are concerned

- As a parent, you know your child best.
- Health visitors and early years practitioners have expert knowledge of child development.
- By working together, you can identify any difficulties your child has with their health, learning or development.
- If your child is struggling with learning, their setting can offer extra support to meet their needs.





# The three Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

[When we see a baby in their cot](#), we're looking at 'the greatest mind that has ever existed, the most powerful learning machine in the universe.'

We can help children become even more powerful learners through three **Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning**:

- ***playing and exploring*** - I investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'.
- ***active learning*** – I concentrate and keep on trying even when I encounter difficulties. I enjoy achieving.
- ***creating and thinking critically*** – I am learning to develop my own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things.





# Playing and Exploring

- I understand that my actions have an effect on the world, so I want to keep on exploring.
- I am learning to plan and think ahead about how I will explore or play with objects.
- I might talk to myself or use visual aids such as pictures while I am playing to help my thinking. For example, when doing a jigsaw, I might whisper under my breath: “Where does that one go? – I need to find the big horse next.”
- I can make independent choices.
- I bring my own interests and fascinations from home into my setting. This helps me to develop my learning.
- I respond to new experiences that you introduce.





# Active Learning

- I join in with routines without needing to be told, like going to my cot when I want to sleep.
- I am learning to predict what might happen because I understand a familiar routine, e.g. I may get my coat when adults open the door to go outside.
- I show goal-directed behaviour, e.g. as a baby I may pull myself up by using the edges of a low table to reach for a toy on top of the table. As a toddler, I might turn a storage box upside down so I can stand on it and reach up for an object.
- I am learning to correct my mistakes myself, e.g. instead of using increasing force to push a puzzle piece into the slot, I try another piece to see if it will fit.
- I keep on trying when things are difficult.





# Creating and Thinking Critically

- I take part in simple pretend play, e.g. I might use an object like a brush to pretend to brush my hair, or 'drink' from a pretend cup.
- I can sort materials, e.g. at tidy-up time, I know how to put different construction materials in separate baskets.
- I can talk about my learning. I think about my progress as I try to achieve a goal. I check how well I am doing.
- I am learning to solve real problems, e.g. to share nine strawberries between three friends, a strategy I might use is to put one in front of each, then a second, then a third. Finally, I might check at the end that everyone has the same number of strawberries.





# Creating and Thinking Critically

- I like to 'pretend' in my play. By pretending to be someone else I can imagine other points of view, e.g. when I am playing 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff' I might suggest that "Maybe the troll is lonely and hungry? That's why he is fierce."
- As I learn more things, I become more confident to come up with my own ideas and explanations. When I know about different types of dinosaurs, I can say which ones are meat-eaters by seeing if they have big sharp teeth.
- I can concentrate hard to achieve something that's important to me. I can focus my attention and ignore any distractions around me.





# 3 & 4-year-olds: how you can help me with my learning?

## Communication & Language

- Have conversations with me about things that I am interested in. Encourage me to keep talking by nodding, smiling and making comments.
- Introduce new words when we are playing, eating or when we are out and about. Explain what new words mean to me.
- Talk to me about things that have already happened and what might happen soon.
- Play listening games with me such as 'Simon Says'.

## Personal, Social & Emotional Development

- Give me tasks to carry out, e.g. washing my plate after snack.
- Model how you manage your own feelings, e.g. *"I'm feeling a bit angry so I am going to take a deep breath."* Help me to understand why I am feeling sad or frustrated.
- Make a ['calm down jar.'](#)



## Physical Development

- Help me with dressing but let me do the last steps, e.g. pulling up my zip after you have started it off.
- Give me lots of opportunities to be active and practise running, jumping, balancing, climbing and swinging.
- Encourage me to walk, scoot or bike to my nursery or childminder.



# 3 & 4-year-olds: how you can help me with my learning?

## Mathematics

- [Point out the number of things rather than just the names](#), e.g. "We have **two** apples!"
- Give me lots of opportunities to count for a real reason and always emphasise the last number – "*There are 3 cookies.*"
- Cut out a large shape from a cereal box (circle, triangle), then cut that shape into 2-4 smaller pieces to make a simple puzzle.
- When we're at the park, use words like 'up', 'under', and 'between' to talk about what we see.
- [Make playdough with me.](#)

## Understanding the World

- Help me make collections of interesting natural materials, e.g. pebbles, shells.
- Let me explore ice, once it has melted a bit (so I don't get frostbite)
- Plant seeds and bulbs with me.
- Take me to different places such as the library.

## Literacy

- Talk about stories with me, what is happening in the pictures? Give me time to think and share my ideas.
- Play around with words. Make up fun rhyming sentences with me.
- Let me help you write birthday cards and shopping lists.

## Expressive Arts & Design

- Make [home-made paintbrushes](#) using clothes pegs and items from around the house and outdoors.
- Join in pretend play with me.
- Give me a cardboard box and some fabric to build a den with.





# 4 & 5-year-olds: how you can help me with my learning

## Communication & Language

- Play games with me where I have to listen to your instructions such as a treasure hunt.
- Share a wide range of books and stories with me, including non-fiction and poetry.
- Talk out aloud, commenting on your actions and mine. This helps me hear clear, well-formed sentences.
- Encourage me to have lots of back and forth conversations with other children and adults.

## Personal, Social & Emotional Development

- Listen carefully to me. Encourage me to express my feelings using words.
- Help me solve problems by talking them through with me. This will help me keep going even when I find it really hard.



## Physical Development

- Give me time and space to be highly active and get out of breath every day.
- Encourage me to crawl on all fours, climb, pull myself up on a rope and hang on monkey bars. These activities will help me develop the strength I need for writing.
- Let me use one-handed tools like peelers and knives.



# 4 & 5-year-olds: how you can help me with my learning

## Mathematics

- [Name small groups of things, this helps me to 'subitise'](#) (instantly seeing how many without counting) e.g. "There are 3 slices of pizza left."
- Ask me to count out a number of things from a group, e.g. "Could you get me 6 eggs?"
- Make number snap or bingo with numerals and pictures. Match the numerals with the right amount.
- Make patterns with objects, e.g. buttons or shells. Such as 'big, small, big...' Make a mistake and talk with me about how to fix it.

## Understanding the World

- Share photos and tell stories about my family, both past and present.
- Take me to places of worship and places of local importance in my community.
- Let me help you cook. Talk about changes such as 'melting' or 'boiling'

## Literacy

- Keep reading with me everyday. Share books that let me see people of different races, cultures, gender and religion.
- Play games where you give me an instruction like "Can you h-o-p?" I have to put the sounds of the word together.
- Let me make up stories – you could write them down for me and we could act them out.
- Make a photo book of our family or when we went to the park and let me write my own words in it.



## Expressive Arts & Design

- Sing and dance with me when we hear our favourite songs. Encourage me to make up my own routine.
- Give me string, scissors, glue, sticky tape and boxes to make a model.