



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



Communication  
and Language

# What happens early, matters for a lifetime

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

- [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.





# Understanding your child's development

- Children develop and learn at different rates and in different ways. Their development is not neat and orderly!
- That's why the Department for Education's guidance document, *Development Matters*, sets out children's learning in broad ages. It shows how lots of different experiences in the first three years of life will help your child to learn.
- In this guide, '*When I'm a baby*' broadly tells you about your child's development in the first year of life. '*When I am a bit older*' tells you about their development as a toddler and two-year old.



# Understanding your child's development

- *Development Matters* includes some **checkpoints**. They can help you and your childminder or early years setting have a conversation, if you're worried about anything. Then you can decide together what to do next.
- The 'checkpoints' are not a 'ticklist' to use for every child.
- Sometimes children have some early difficulties in their development. With the right help, they can quickly grow out of these difficulties.
- For example, 70% of children with delayed communication in the early years won't have problems later in school. Those 'late talkers' need lots of opportunities to [chat, play and read](#).
- Some children will have long-term difficulties, so it's important to identify what their needs are and make sure they get the support they need.
- Every child can make good progress, with the right support.





# 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.

A photograph of a man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue patterned sweater, sitting on a brown patterned couch. He is holding an open book and looking at it. A young girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a pink shirt, is sitting next to him, looking at the book. The background shows a green door and a staircase.

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

Even a few  
minutes can make  
a difference.

# Birth to three: how you can help me with my learning

## Communication & Language

- Use a sing-song voice, this helps me tune in to language.
- Respond to my babble.
- Talk about what you are doing *"I'm pouring out your milk into the cup."*
- Have back and forth 'conversations' – play 'peekaboo' and copy-cat games.
- Talk to me in our home language.



## Communication & Language

- Sing songs and rhymes during everyday activities like nappy changes.
- Tell me the names of things as I pick them up to explore. I need to hear a variety of words.
- Listen and wait for me to speak or communicate with a sound or a look first. Repeat and build on what I say by adding one or two words.
- When you talk to me, give me time – 10 seconds helps me understand and think of a reply.



# 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'.



# 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.

