CHCECE035
Support the holistic learning and development of children

Learner Guide

Updated to include National Quality Framework changes

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CHCECE035

Support the holistic learning and development of children

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 2.1

One World for Children Pty Ltd

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CHCECE035 Support the holistic learning and development of children, Release 1

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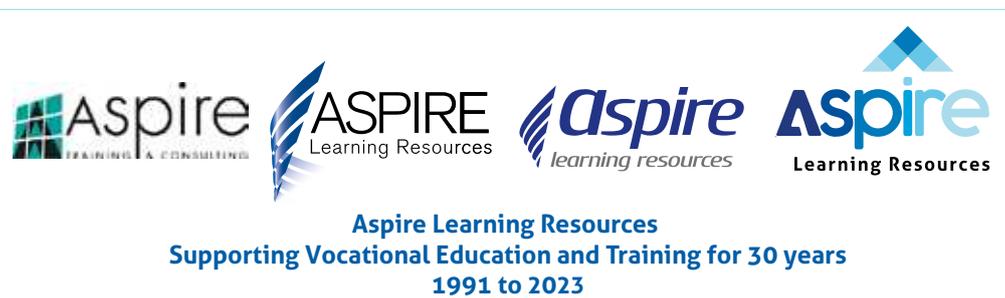
Aspire Learning Resources
Supporting Vocational Education and Training for 30 years
1991 to 2023

Contents

Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE035 Support the holistic learning and development of children*, Release 1.

Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. Information regarding how this Learner Guide relates to this unit of competency is detailed in our mapping guide.

How to work through this Learner Guide

This Learner Guide contains a number of features that will assist you in your learning. Your trainer will advise which parts of the Learner Guide you need to read, and which Practice Tasks and Learning Checkpoints you need to complete.

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	➤ Read each topic in this Learner Guide. If you come across content that is confusing, make a note and discuss it with your trainer. Your trainer is in the best position to offer assistance. It is very important that you take on some of the responsibility for the learning you will undertake.
Examples	➤ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice Tasks	➤ Practice Tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.
Summaries	➤ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning Checkpoints	➤ There are Learning Checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

This table maps each topic in this Learner Guide to the National Quality Standard and national learning framework: Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).

T = Topic

Topics	National Quality Standard (NQS)
T1–T6	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
T1, T2	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
T1–T6	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
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	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
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	Collaborative leadership and teamwork
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T1–T6	Responsiveness to children
T1–T6	Play-based learning and intentionality
T1–T6	Learning environments
	Cultural responsiveness
T3, T4	Continuity of learning and transitions
	Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing
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T1–T6	1. Children have a strong sense of identity
T1	2. Children are connected to and contribute to their world
T3-T5	3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
T1–T6	4. Children are confident and involved learners
T6	5. Children are effective communicators
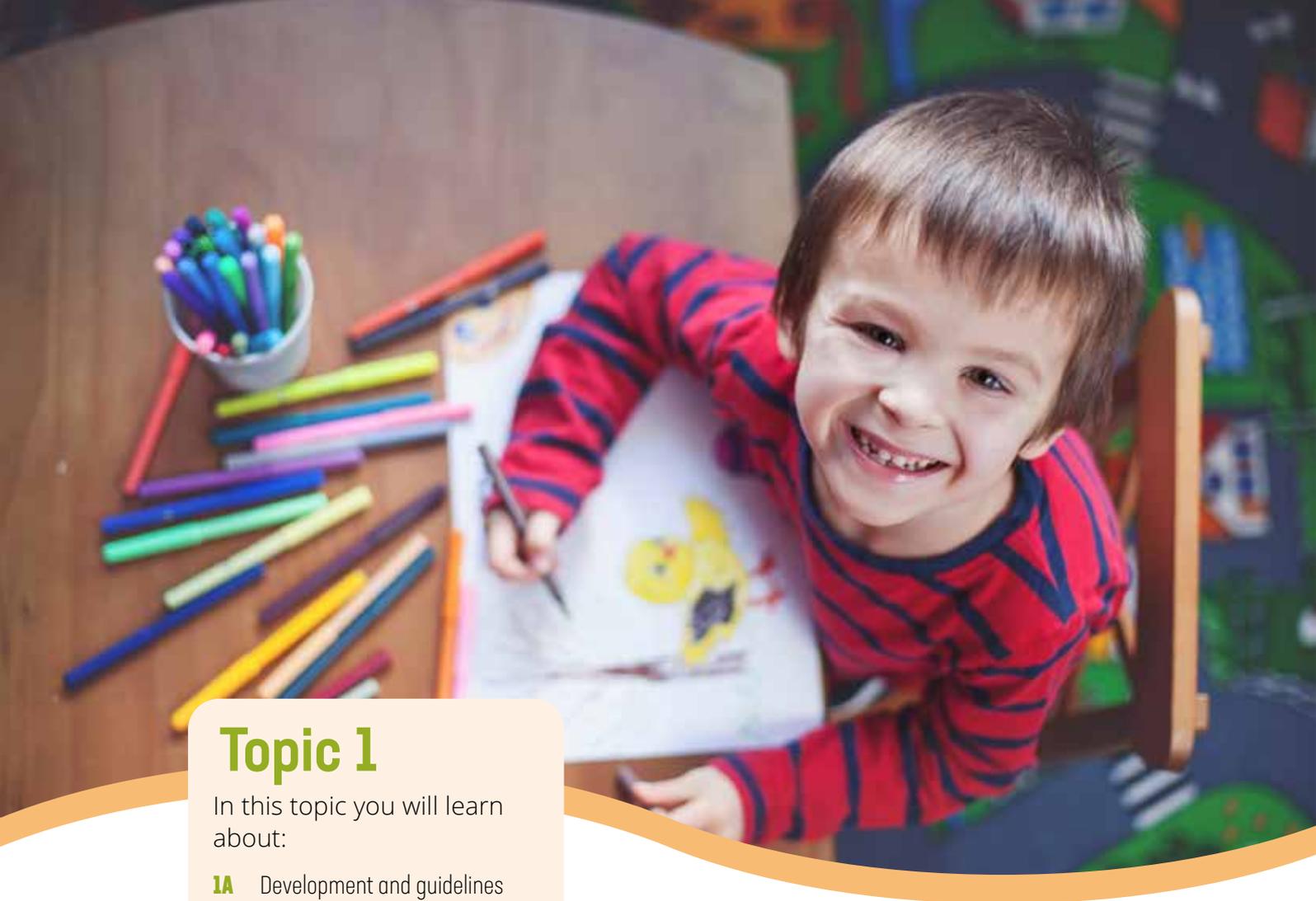
Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

1A   Development and guidelines

1B   Foundations of development

1C   Strategies for supporting development

Holistic learning and development

Your knowledge of child development and individual growth patterns allows you to plan and implement developmentally appropriate learning experiences.

You can use research about childhood development and learning to give structure to your own experience of children's stages and areas of development.

Your personal and professional qualities, combined with realistic expectations, significantly influence your ability to support the development of children.

1A Development and guidelines

Children have the right to feel safe, to learn and play, and to have their basic needs provided for.

To make sure this occurs, responsibilities have been set out for governments, communities, services, families and educators in the form of a National Quality Framework (NQF). The NQF includes the following components:

It is your responsibility to make sure children feel happy, safe and supported.

> Laws – Education and Care Services National Law
> Regulations – Education and Care Services National Regulations
> Standards – National Quality Standard (NQS)
> Approved learning frameworks – *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF) and *My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia* (MTOP)

The NQF components should be represented through service policies and procedures. Educators must use these guidelines – and other theories related to child development – to help them develop practices that achieve high-quality child development and wellbeing outcomes.

You can find out more about the NQF and its components in the *Guide to the National Quality Framework,* an online document found at: aspirelr.link/nqf-guide-pdf. It details the quality areas, standards and associated elements, including references, links and an assessment guide.

National Quality Framework (NQF)

The NQF is a system used across Australia to help education and care services work toward best practice and best quality.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) oversees the implementation of the NQF. ACECQA also educates and informs the community, the education and care industry, and government about current research and best practice across Australia.

The NQF incorporates licensing, regulations and quality assurance into a single system operating Australia-wide. It aims to improve the quality of education and care services.

This framework applies to:

> long day care
> family day care
> preschool/kindergarten
> outside school hours care.

Laws and regulations

The NQF includes the Education and Care Services National Regulations, which are developed to reflect the Education and Care Services National Law.

Laws and regulations are requirements that education and care services must adhere to.

The following table outlines some laws and regulations you should be aware of.

Area of program	Requirement	What the requirement is about
Educational program and practice	Section 168: Offence relating to required programs Regulation 73: Educational program	All educational programs must contribute to learning outcomes.
Children's health and safety	Section 165: Offence to inadequately supervise children	Children must be supervised at all times.
Physical environment	Regulation 113: Outdoor space—natural environment	Services must allow children to explore and experience the natural environment.
Relationships with children	Regulation 155: Interactions with children	Educators must: ➤ encourage children to express themselves and their opinions ➤ undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem ➤ maintain the dignity and rights of each child ➤ give each child positive guidance and encouragement toward acceptable behaviour ➤ have regard to the family and cultural values, age, and physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child.

National Quality Standard (NQS)

The NQS is the measurement system for education and care services.

It is part of the NQF and its role is to provide services with a clear set of guidelines showing what is required if they are to meet an expected level of quality.

The NQS includes seven quality areas relating to different areas of education and care:

> Quality area 1: Educational program and practice
> Quality area 2: Children's health and safety
> Quality area 3: Physical environment
> Quality area 4: Staffing arrangements
> Quality area 5: Relationships with children
> Quality area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
> Quality area 7: Governance and leadership

In general terms, components of the NQS include:

> Quality areas: Very broad areas that identify what services must think about.
> Standards: Break the quality areas down into particular areas that are important.
> Elements: Tell you exactly what needs to be done in each standard to meet the quality level required.

The following table outlines the quality areas, standards and elements of the NQS.

Part of the NQS	Concept	Descriptor
Quality area 1	Educational program and practice	
Standard 1.1	Program	The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.
Element 1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision-making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
Element 1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.
Element 1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.

Part of the NQS	Concept	Descriptor
Standard 1.2	Practice	Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.
Element 1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
Element 1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play, and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
Element 1.2.3	Child-directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.
Standard 1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
Element 1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing, learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
Element 1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
Element 1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.
Quality area 2	**Children's health and safety**	
Standard 2.1	Health	Each child's health is promoted.
Element 2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
Element 2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

Part of the NQS	Concept	Descriptor
Element 2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
Standard 2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
Element 2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
Element 2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.
Element 2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect.
Quality area 3	**Physical environment**	
Standard 3.1	Design	The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.
Element 3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
Element 3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture and equipment are safe, clean and well maintained.
Standard 3.2	Use	The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning.
Element 3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences in both built and natural environments.
Element 3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.

Part of the NQS	Concept	Descriptor
Element 3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.
Quality area 4	**Staffing arrangements**	
Standard 4.1	Staffing arrangements	Staffing arrangements enhance children's learning and development
Element 4.1.1	Organisation of educators	The organisation of educators across the service supports children's learning and development.
Element 4.1.2	Continuity of staff	Every effort is made for children to experience continuity of educators at the service.
Standard 4.2	Professionalism	Management, educators and staff are collaborative, respectful and ethical.
Element 4.2.1	Professional collaboration	Management, educators and staff work with mutual respect and collaboratively, and challenge and learn from each other, recognising each other's strengths and skills.
Element 4.2.2	Professional standards	Professional standards guide practice, interactions and relationships.
Quality area 5	**Relationships with children**	
Standard 5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.
Element 5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
Element 5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
Standard 5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.
Element 5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other.

Part of the NQS	Concept	Descriptor
Element 5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.
Quality area 6	Collaborative partnerships with families and communities	
Standard 6.1	Supportive relationships with families	Respectful relationships with families are developed and maintained, and families are supported in their parenting role.
Element 6.1.1	Engagement with the service	Families are supported from enrolment to be involved in the service and contribute to service decisions.
Element 6.1.2	Parent views are respected	The expertise, culture, values and beliefs of families are respected, and families share in decision-making about their child's learning and wellbeing.
Element 6.1.3	Families are supported	Current information is available to families about the service, and relevant community services and resources to support parenting and family wellbeing.
Standard 6.2	Collaborative partnerships	Collaborative partnerships enhance children's inclusion, learning and wellbeing.
Element 6.2.1	Transitions	Continuity of learning and transitions for each child are supported by sharing information and clarifying responsibilities.
Element 6.2.2	Access and participation	Effective partnerships support children's access, inclusion and participation in the program.
Element 6.2.3	Community engagement	The service builds relationships and engages with its community.
Quality area 7	Governance and leadership	
Standard 7.1	Governance	Governance supports the operation of a quality service.
Element 7.1.1	Service philosophy and purpose	A statement of philosophy guides all aspects of the service's operations.

Part of the NQS	Concept	Descriptor
Element 7.1.2	Management systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
Element 7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.
Standard 7.2	Leadership	Effective leadership builds and promotes a positive organisational culture and professional learning community.
Element 7.2.1	Continuous improvement	There is an effective self-assessment and quality improvement process in place.
Element 7.2.2	Educational leadership	The educational leader is supported and leads the development and implementation of the educational program and assessment and planning cycle.
Element 7.2.3	Development of professionals	Educators, coordinators and staff members' performance is regularly evaluated and individual plans are in place to support learning and development.

The following areas are most related to the holistic development of children.

Quality area	How this relates to what you do
1 – Educational program and practice	Guides you to understand development and learning, and to do something with the information you understand.
2 – Children's health and safety	Supports you to make sure children's basic needs are met, including their diet, sleep, rest, relaxation, illness, injuries and need for protection against abuse or neglect.
3 – Physical environment	Provides information on how to set up and maintain an environment, resources and materials that are suited to children's developmental needs and are adapted to the individual development of each child.
5 – Relationships with children	Sets out information about how to interact with and show respect for children, to work with them and to help them develop strong communication skills.

Service policies and procedures

Service policies and procedures will reflect the whole of the NQF.

Service policies and procedures are in place to make sure that the education and care laws, regulations and standards are followed.

Services will have a range of policies that identify the beliefs that the service bases its procedures on and explain how it expects things should be done. There are particular policies that services must have. These are listed in Regulation 168 and include:

> - nutrition, food and beverages, and dietary requirements
> - sun protection
> - water safety, including safety during any water-based activities
> - the administration of first aid
> - sleep and rest for children
> - incident, injury, trauma and illness procedures complying with Regulation 85
> - dealing with infectious diseases, including procedures complying with Regulation 88
> - dealing with medical conditions in children, including the matters set out in Regulation 90
> - emergency and evacuation, including the matters set out in Regulation 97
> - delivery of children to, and collection of children from, education and care service premises, including procedures complying with Regulation 99
> - excursions, including procedures complying with Regulations 100–102
> - providing a child safe environment
> - staffing
> - interactions with children, including the matters set out in Regulations 155 and 156
> - enrolment and orientation
> - governance and management of the service, including confidentiality of records
> - the acceptance and refusal of authorisations
> - payment of fees and provision of a statement of fees charged by the education and care service
> - dealing with complaints.

Other policies and procedures you will find in services are the following.

Educational program and practice	> Programming or curriculum policy
Children's health and safety	> Supervision policy
Physical environment	> Inclusive environment policy > Environment policy > Play-based learning policy
Relationships with children	> Behaviour guidance policy
Staffing	> Code of conduct > Grievance policy

Approved learning frameworks

The approved learning framework for early childhood, birth to six years is Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (EYLF).

A nationally approved framework is designed to:

> inspire and improve conversations between educators about young children and their learning

> provide a common language about learning that educators, children, families, the community and professionals can all use.

The EYLF is made up of the following sections:

> Principles: things educators believe

> Practices: things educators do

> Outcomes: things that link to children's learning and development

> Sub-outcomes: break downs or dot points under each outcome

The EYLF supports your understanding of child development and how children learn. Here is an example of how two principles help you focus on how you can learn more.

Principle – Partnerships

Families will contribute to the learning community if they are encouraged to share their values and beliefs with you in a range of ways. They will choose to get involved if they feel confident that their wishes for their child are being respected and considered throughout the day.

Ways educators might communicate with families:

> Find out about the structure and culture of the family and any expectations or actions that show respect. Identify if there is a particular person you will communicate with, someone who takes responsibility for the family or community.

> Schedule family–educator–child meetings to establish goals and share service changes.

> Listen to family members tell you about their children's strengths and how they learn.

> Communicate with families about their children during the day through phone, email or service apps.

> Make sure family members know the phone numbers or email addresses of the service, and the times you are available to take phone calls or emails from them.

> Give family members positive messages about their children.

> Make an effort to communicate with any family member who does not normally attend the service; for example, if the father always drops off and picks up the child, consider how you can make contact with the mother.

> Provide family members with structured ways to comment on the service's communications; for example, email, telephone or take-home surveys.

> Speak to family members directly (not just leaving messages on voice mail or sending emails).

> Provide copies of service information in a variety of ways; for example, in printed handbooks and online.

The open communication you establish by managing communication effectively will ensure that families not only share their needs and issues, but will choose to do so in a positive way as part of their partnership with you. They will also feel confident in sharing milestones and events, and will be comfortable participating in your program.

Principle – Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning

Your understanding of children will grow over time as you gain experience, learn new things, and come across different environments and attitudes. Personal and professional development is important and continues throughout life. It helps you to remain enthusiastic when the work you do is challenging.

Professional development includes learning at work, as well as the activities you are involved in outside your daily work environment. You could learn and exchange information about child development and wellbeing by sharing information and collaborating with colleagues. You might do this by:

➤ talking about the day, children's learning and how experiences aid development

➤ asking questions about things you aren't sure about or don't understand, how things work, what your responsibilities are and how you can improve

➤ attending staff meetings

➤ becoming involved in discussions that are happening in the service.

You might also find information by:

➤ attending training sessions

➤ participating in a performance review

➤ reading further on topics that you would like to learn about

➤ gaining a qualification

➤ making contact with a specialist service or resource worker

➤ joining a professional organisation.

Australian Early Development Census

Decisions about quality practice occur through research that gathers past and present information about children and their progress.

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a body that collects details from teachers of children in their first year of school. This occurs every three years. The Instrument collect information about children's skills under five domains:

➤ Physical health and well being

➤ Social competence

➤ Emotional maturity

➤ Language and cognitive skills that are used at school

➤ Communication skills and general knowledge

Some ways the AEDC can support educators is through helping in the following ways:

Advocating for children in early childhood	➤ Raising awareness of the importance of education and care ➤ Providing information about the five domains ➤ Sharing information with others about the importance of early childhood education services ➤ Encouraging a positive view of early childhood education

Building partnerships with stakeholders	➤ Families ➤ Colleagues and others working in early childhood ➤ Other education and care services ➤ Schools ➤ Teachers ➤ Local government ➤ Community members
Developing child focussed initiatives	➤ Understanding when children are vulnerable and looking at the factors in the community that contribute to this ➤ Comparing service and family quality of care to determine protective and risk factors, particularly how economic, political and cultural environments effect development. ➤ Supporting children's transition to school by encouraging schools and early childhood services to work together
Advising ACECQA	➤ Providing data that shows how practice influences development ➤ Supporting development of NQS and EYLF
Providing research results relating to development	➤ Educators can access services and resources ➤ Data relating to level of risk and vulnerability based on development

You can access the AEDC at aspirelr.link/aedc

Planning cycle

Educators use a planning cycle so that they know the next steps to take when they notice development and learning.

The planning cycle is based on your knowledge of child development. When you are aware of child development, you can identify when a child is learning and this helps you to know what learning might come next.

The following diagram demonstrates how the planning cycle occurs.
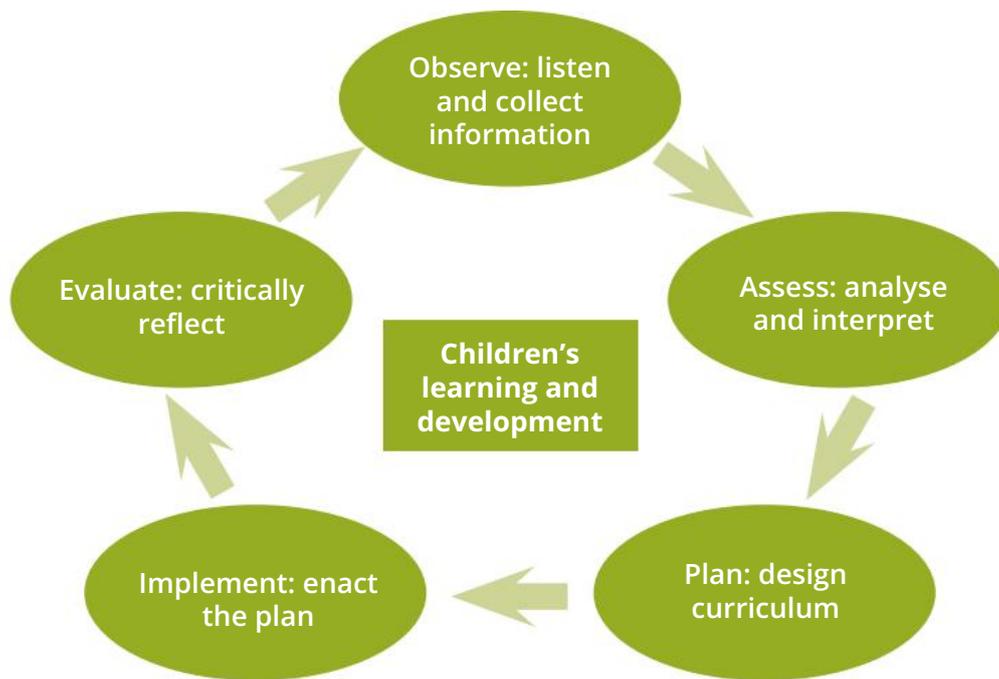
Example
Curriculum requirements

Maud was planning an experience outdoors in the garden. She took the following things into consideration:

> The service must follow rules and expectations, including laws, regulations, the NQS, policies and procedures.

> The experience must link with a learning outcome – this is outlined in the NQF, Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations.

> The children must be supervised at all times – outlined in the Education and Care Services National Law.

> The materials and equipment must be safe and suit the age, stage and ability of the children – outlined in the Regulations, NQS, policies and procedures.

> The experience would allow the children to experience and interact with the natural environment – outlined in the Regulations.

> Her interactions with children will be positive and help them understand their task – outlined in the Regulations, NQS, policies and procedures.

✎ Practice Task 1

1. Draw a line to match each requirement of the NQF on the left with its description.

   * Behaviour guidance policy

   * EYLF Principle: Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning

   * Health and safety laws and regulations

   * NQS educational program and practice

   * Guides educators to support holistic learning and development by collaborating with and seeking information from each other.

   * Guides you to understand development and learning and to do something with the information you understand.

   * Makes it clear that children must be supervised at all times.

   * Guides educator relationships with children.

2. What is one function of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)?

.   ...

.   ...

.   ...

.   ...

1B Foundations of development

Researchers collect information (data) and use this to try to explain and predict development and behaviour.

The result of this research is a theory or a set of ideas put forward as an explanation. Theories can be developed, modified or even discarded as they are tested against observations.

Theories show you where ideas come from and provide proof that quality practices have a sound basis in research, practice and discussion. Your service's regulations, standards, policies and procedures are based on the results of theory and research.

Theories can be used to predict development and behaviour.

Authoritative and credible sources

To find out about learning and development, you may need to research or collect information.

When this occurs, you must use current and clear information that comes from a reliable source. What this means is that the information should be authoritative, trusted as true and accurate, and credible, believable and convincing.

Some authoritative and credible sources would be:

> textbooks
> study materials
> factsheets from specialists
> government-based websites.

You can find authoritative and credible sources of information at:

> ACECQA website: aspirelr.link/acecqa
> AEDC website: aspirelr.link/aedc

Both these bodies can direct you to further resources.

Example
Authoritative and credible sources

Valerie is researching development. She begins by looking on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website. She finds the 'Help & Support' tab and realises that there are many links to authoritative and credible resources that provide her with the information she needs, and offers additional sites to deepen her understanding. She knows these are appropriate as ACECQA, the national regulator, has listed them.

Development descriptions

Some of the words used when talking about development research or theory can be confusing.

Here are some definitions to help.

Biological	Living things and how people are related by blood; for example, being a mother, father, sister or brother.
DNA	DNA is short for 'deoxyribonucleic acid'. It is the centre of the cells that make up living things. It is responsible for personal characteristics and is passed on from parents to children.
Genes	A region of DNA that performs or encodes a function. For example, different genes will determine eye colour, skin colour, height and sex.
Genetics	The study of genes and heredity. Looking at the genes allows us to see the characteristics we have received from our mother and father.
Heredity	The passing on of physical or mental characteristics through genes; for example, a mother and daughter having blue eyes and blonde hair, a father and son having poor eyesight and needing glasses.
Maturation	The process of maturing. This is about the way people start as babies and grow and develop to be adults.

All of these things influence each other; for example:

➤ biological influences are linked to heredity, genetics and maturation
➤ environmental influences are linked to nurturing and what children are taught through interaction with the environment.

Physical growth and development

Children's growth has been monitored for many years in western countries and was the focus of one of the first studies of children.

Growth is monitored from birth and is measured using percentile charts, which classify a child's growth pattern into 'lower than average', 'average' and 'upper average' compared to all the children studied.

Here are some facts relating to physical growth:

> At birth an infant's head is one quarter of their body length.
> As adults our heads are one eighth of our body length.
> During the first five years of life, body proportions change rapidly as the body grows quickly to catch up to the head.
> In the first year there is significant weight gain, and infants double their weight in the first six months.
> Teeth erupt at around six months of age.
> By age four, a child has doubled their length (height).
> Before reaching preschool age, children have lost some of their body fat percentage.
> Children with slower bone growth usually walk later and may also reach puberty later.

Children's growth is influenced by their genetics, environment and nurturing. Australian society comprises a diverse range of racial and cultural groups, so children's health and nutritional backgrounds could be quite different.

Changes in a child's diet affect not only their growth and nutritional health. The types of food that a child eats affect the physical development of their mouth and jaw, which links with the child's ability to form words and speak. By providing the right foods at the right time, the child is able to develop at what is considered the normal rate.

Children's growth and development is also influenced by the safety of their environment. For example, children who are at risk of harm or who are placed in hazardous environments, often lack confidence in their abilities and, as a result, may not develop skills that are expected for their age. Their growth may be held back by stress on their bodies and poor nutrition. Your ability to control hazards and risks in the environment assists children to grow and develop to reach their full potential.

Solid foods influence physical growth

Biological influences

In the past, child and adolescent development was considered to be a wholly biological process, called 'maturation'.

Children were seen as 'miniature adults' who only needed to get taller and stronger. We now understand that there are many environmental influences on the path to adulthood.

As children mature, they become ready to learn new skills. Maturation is believed to be driven by an individual's biologically determined developmental pathway. This means that one skill is expected to be learnt before another. The experiences provided to children give them the chance to use and test the skills they are developing at different maturity stages.

Scaffolding during teachable moments

Certain periods of a child's development seem to be the best time for them to learn.

A 'teachable moment' occurs spontaneously when you notice learning can take place and you take advantage of this. Teachable moments might relate to a milestone or they might be opportunities for you to extend a child's knowledge. For example, a child might see a bug, so you talk to them about how many legs it has.

These moments are also known as 'critical periods' or 'windows of opportunity' and are times when particular learning experiences provide the child with maximum benefits. This teaching is called 'scaffolding'.

By observing a child's stage of development, and planning suitable experiences for that child, you will be providing the child with an opportunity to strengthen their skills. This approach is a safe way for you to identify when a child is ready to move on and be provided with opportunities to extend their learning and skills.

The following table describes the scaffolding that supports walking and writing.

Walking	Walking is a developmental milestone that occurs around 12 months of age. However, it may start earlier or later. For instance, some children may walk at 10 months, others at 18 months.
	A child approaching this milestone has a critical period just before they begin to walk when they start to stand up and move themselves around by holding onto furniture.
	To support this critical period you could provide scaffolding by:
	➤ clearing areas for the child to move around without tripping
	➤ supporting by holding their hands or arms, or by standing behind the child to catch them if they fall
	➤ setting up furniture or equipment that is the right height for the child to hold onto safely
	➤ encouraging through clapping, smiling and positive comments.
Writing	Beginning to write is a developmental milestone that occurs around five years of age. Again, it could happen earlier or later; some children may learn to write at four years, others at six years.
	A child approaching this milestone has a critical period just before they begin to write when they gain more control over the pen or pencil and start to create figures that look like letters.
	To support this critical period you could provide scaffolding by providing:
	➤ chunky pencils that are easy for small hands to grip
	➤ plain or lined paper
	➤ play experiences that develop the fine motor control of the hand, such as pegging out washing, squeezing play dough or cutting paper shapes
	➤ a model of letters or the child's name to copy
	➤ encouragement through smiling and positive comments.

Environmental influences

While maturation plays a part in all development, learning is dependent on the environment that is available to the child.

Learning is a problem-solving process. One learning experience can be used to work out possible solutions to the next problem or learning experience. This means that the process of learning is just as important as the result of learning.

Critical periods are valuable times for learning; however, there are environmental aspects that can negatively affect early childhood development. Any life experience that interrupts childhood activities may have an effect on development in some areas.

The following are influences that may interrupt childhood activities.

Influence	Example
Poor diet	➤ Unhealthy diet ➤ Lack of food ➤ Diet that lacks variety ➤ Food consistency/texture does not suit developmental needs
Lack of play, stimulation, materials or resources	➤ Play time is always organised ➤ Being restrained or kept in a space without the ability to choose activities ➤ Lack of opportunity or materials to play ➤ Lack of opportunity to see and interact with other children ➤ Being discouraged from playing or told it is not acceptable ➤ Having a higher value placed on structured educational skills
Inconsistent or non-existent emotional support or comfort	➤ Having caregivers who change regularly ➤ Having caregivers who are unable or unwilling to provide care and affection ➤ Being told to be brave or harden up ➤ Emotional responses or reactions not being acceptable ➤ Being supported sometimes and not supported other times ➤ Lack of human interaction or physical contact ➤ Not having needs met

Influence	Example
Trauma	➤ Experiencing accidents and incidents ➤ Witnessing or being the victim of a crime ➤ Experiencing violence (i.e. family violence) ➤ Witnessing or experiencing drug abuse ➤ Having unwell family members ➤ Being the victim of child abuse ➤ Experiencing invasive medical or surgical procedures ➤ Experiencing homelessness ➤ Being forced to leave a home, family or country ➤ Experiencing a natural disaster, such as a drought, bushfire, cyclone or flood ➤ Witnessing violence, including on TV or in video games ➤ Hearing or seeing sexual acts ➤ Being a refugee or held in detention

Other life experiences, such as illness or family disruptions, can also interrupt childhood activities.

These environmental factors can cause serious problems for children, including:

➤ lack of physical health, such as low energy levels, and poor muscle strength and control
➤ intellectual delay and learning difficulties
➤ lack of belonging or safety
➤ uncertainty about their identity
➤ anxiety
➤ hyperactivity
➤ aggression
➤ impulsiveness
➤ lack of curiosity
➤ fear of new things, people, objects or exploration.

At times these effects might flow into adulthood, with common outcomes being:

➤ depression
➤ anxiety and panic disorders
➤ substance abuse
➤ suicidal thoughts
➤ criminality.

By creating a responsive, safe and healthy environment, you will be helping children to learn and develop to be the best they can be.

Brain development

Brain development has a great effect on how a child learns. Heredity (nature) defines the framework of a brain, but the environment (nurture) influences its development.

Children's brains are constantly developing new connections (synapses), which reflect their life experiences. Synapses develop early in life and, along with genetics (heredity), this determines a child's possible brain capabilities. When the brain is provided with learning opportunities and experiences, the circuit of synapses are strengthened. When skills are not encouraged or experienced, the synapses are pruned.
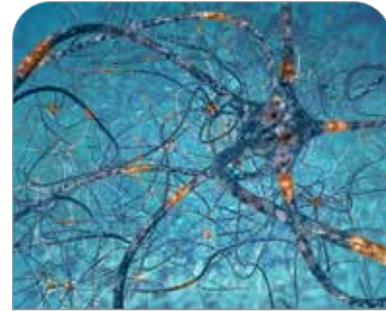
Learning encourages synapses in the brain to form connections.

Research shows that the quality of experiences and relationships during the first years of life has a massive and lasting impact on brain development. Rich environments, experiences and interactions result in faster and more meaningful learning. Environmental influences include:

> adequate rest and nutrition
> clean drinking water
> a safe environment
> different environmental locations (such as visits to the zoo or the beach)
> appropriate materials and equipment
> adequate space for developing motor skills
> good oxygen supply
> appropriate levels of stimulation – over-stimulation can distract children.

It has been found that if a child is lovingly cared for and provided with stimulating, meaningful interactions and activity at critical learning periods, the child's brain will develop to a greater extent. This also means that the brain wiring will form stronger and more permanent connections than a child who does not benefit from these interactions.

Ultimately, the more positive experiences a child has, the greater their ability to learn and develop in early childhood and throughout their lives.

Developmental milestones

Every child passes through key stages of development. Each child develops at their own rate, so there is a period of change between each of these stages.

Developmental stage	Approximate age
Infant (from birth to walking)	0–12 months
Toddler (from walking to preschool age)	1–3 years
Preschooler	3–5 years

Milestones are the markers that identify that a particular stage of development has been reached. Many planning processes use milestones in some way, as they are significant skills or events in a child's life that help educators, families and health professionals to monitor and support their development and learning.

The milestones of child development are divided into major areas called domains or areas of development. When considered together, this is called 'holistic learning and development'. The domains include:

> **Physical development**: The development of large muscles (gross motor skills) and small muscles (fine motor skills).

> **Social development**: The development of the skills of interacting with others and understanding how people communicate and send messages to each other through their words and actions.

> **Emotional development**: The development of feelings and how to understand and manage these, as well as developing an understanding of who we are and where we belong.

> **Cognitive development**: The development of thinking skills and the ability to learn, including problem-solving and understanding concepts such as mathematics and symbols.

> **Communication development**: The development of language including speaking, listening, reading, writing and body language.

These domains are the foundation of a quality education and care curriculum. The quality areas in the NQS and the EYLF are based on your ability to understand development, to develop relationships and to provide an environment appropriate to this understanding.

The following tables illustrate some milestones for each age group. These milestones have been sourced from ACECQA and are based on the EYLF and NQS. For more information, go to: aspirelr.link/acecqa-developmental-milestones.

Physical milestones

The following table outlines physical milestones, including gross and fine motor skills, for children of various ages.

Age	Gross motor skills	Fine motor skills
0–4 months	> Moves whole body > Begins to roll from side to side > Takes swipes at dangling objects > Raises head while lying on stomach	> Reflexively grasps finger or object placed in their hand > Opens and shuts hands

Age	Gross motor skills	Fine motor skills
4–8 months	➤ Plays with feet and toes ➤ Tries to sit alone ➤ Can reach for things voluntarily ➤ Holds head upright in a sitting position ➤ Raises head and chest when on stomach ➤ Rolls over ➤ Makes crawling movements ➤ Can hold own weight in standing position	➤ Brings hands and toys to their mouth ➤ Shakes toys
8–12 months	➤ Sits without support ➤ Crawls or shuffles ➤ Brings toes to mouth ➤ Pulls self to standing position by holding onto furniture ➤ Walks with assistance ➤ May be able to walk independently	➤ Transfers objects from one hand to another ➤ Pokes with thumb and fingers ➤ Holds small items ➤ Throws small items ➤ Can feed self with hands ➤ Can hold spoon and try to feed self ➤ Rolls a ball
1–2 years	➤ Walks, climbs and runs ➤ Crawls up stairs ➤ Dances to music ➤ Climbs onto chair ➤ Kicks and throws a ball ➤ Squats	➤ Holds large crayon with a palmar grasp (in a fist) and marks paper ➤ Places objects in another person's hand and lets go ➤ Turns pages of a book ➤ Drinks from a cup ➤ Uses spoon and fork
2–3 years	➤ Walks, runs, climbs with ease ➤ Jumps using both feet ➤ Jumps over low objects ➤ Kicks a large ball ➤ Avoids obstacles ➤ Opens doors ➤ Can stop walking or running readily ➤ Dresses with help	➤ Feeds self with fork and spoon ➤ Holds a crayon or pencil between the thumb and fingers ➤ Turns pages of a book one at a time ➤ Scribbles in circles and lines ➤ Catches a rolled ball

Age	Gross motor skills	Fine motor skills
3–5 years	➤ Walks up stairs ➤ Balances on one foot momentarily ➤ Dresses and undresses ➤ Hops, jumps and runs ➤ Gallops and skips ➤ Climbs playground equipment ➤ Can use the toilet unassisted ➤ Enjoys rhythm and movement	➤ Uses scissors with some control ➤ Draws shapes ➤ Begins to hold a crayon/pencil in tripod grasp (between the thumb and two fingers) ➤ Shows hand preference ➤ Feeds self with minimal spills

Social and emotional milestones

The following table outlines social and emotional milestones for children of various ages.

Age	Social skills	Emotional skills
0–4 months	➤ Begins to smile at people at six weeks ➤ Enjoys social play with caregivers ➤ Fascination and interest in mirror images and faces ➤ Squeals with delight ➤ Moves head to sound of voices	➤ Bonds to familiar adults ➤ Cries when hungry or uncomfortable ➤ Likes to be held ➤ Shows excitement when preparing to feed
4–8 months	➤ Responds to own name ➤ Excited about meals ➤ Recognises familiar people ➤ Holds hands out to be picked up	➤ Laughs ➤ May suck thumb or dummy for comfort ➤ May be wary of strangers ➤ May be upset when family member leaves ➤ Happy to see known people
8-12 months		➤ Becomes increasingly shy with strangers ➤ Separation anxiety increases ➤ Actively explores with a known person
1–2 years	➤ Begins to cooperate when playing ➤ Plays near others (parallel play) ➤ Shows curiosity	➤ Seeks comfort when needed ➤ Takes cues from adults ➤ May lose control of behaviour when tired or frustrated ➤ Helps other children if upset by patting or offering objects

Age	Social skills	Emotional skills
2–3 years	➤ Imitates the world around them through social play ➤ Becomes increasingly independent and exerts control with the use of the word 'no' ➤ Does not have the ability to share toys and equipment	➤ Starts to show they know what is right and wrong ➤ Less willing to share toys ➤ Demands adult attention
3–5 years	➤ Can cooperate with other children more regularly ➤ Negotiates simple solutions to problems and conflicts with peers ➤ Pretend play increases as children act out what they see	➤ Understands when someone is hurt and comforts them ➤ May praise themselves and be boastful

Cognitive and communication milestones

The following table outlines cognitive and communication milestones for children of various ages.

Age	Cognitive skills	Communication skills
0–4 months	➤ Imitates facial gestures ➤ Explores the world with their hands and mouth ➤ Repeats actions, but not sure they are causing them	➤ Coos and gurgles ➤ Pays attention to human voices more than any other sound ➤ Imitates and responds to sounds
4–8 months	➤ Repeats accidental actions ➤ Enjoys games such as peek-a-boo ➤ Looks, hears and touches ➤ Searches for partially hidden objects ➤ Enjoys objects that make noises ➤ Explores by touching, looking and mouthing	➤ Babbles and repeats sounds ➤ Makes talking sounds to respond to others ➤ Copies sounds ➤ Responds to own name
8–12 months	➤ Repeats actions such as dropping a toy, then dropping it again if it is handed back ➤ Smiles at image in the mirror ➤ Notices differences ➤ Shows surprise	➤ First words may be spoken (often 'dada' or 'mama') ➤ Waves goodbye ➤ Claps hands ➤ Enjoys finger rhymes ➤ Shouts to get attention

Age	Cognitive skills	Communication skills
1–2 years	› Repeats actions that lead to interesting results, such as banging objects › Points to named objects › Knows some body parts › Recognises self in mirror and photos › Pretends to do household chores such as sweeping the floor › Explores objects by mouthing, shaking and banging › Stacks and knocks over items › Calls self by name › Will search for hidden toys	› Understands simple questions › Says first name › Says many words › Uses two-word sentences › Will imitate other toddlers › Enjoys rhymes and songs › Uses 'I' and 'mine'
2–3 years	› Builds a tower of five to seven objects › Lines up objects › Recognises objects in pictures › Explores sand, water and play dough › Uses symbolic play, such as using a block for a car › Begins to count › Recognises similarities and differences › Pretends to be an animal › Can follow two or more directions	› Uses two or three words together › Asks lots of questions › Copies words and actions › Makes music, sings and dances › Listens to books and stories
3–5 years	› Understands opposites › Builds and constructs with understanding of balance and angles › Can count five to ten things › Talks to self when playing › Names and matches colours › Follows instructions and rules › Able to recall stories and events › Can recognise and write some letters and numbers	› Speaks in sentences › Uses many words › Answers simple questions › Asks many questions › Tells stories › Takes part in conversations › Enjoys jokes, rhymes and stories › Uses words to explain what they want › Attains gender stability (she is a girl/he is a boy)

Holistic learning and development examples

Many different areas of development are needed to achieve a skill.

Learning and development is not separated into different areas. Each new skill requires advances in several areas that combine to achieve an outcome. This is known as the holistic development of skills.

The following table outlines examples of how each area of development is used to learn a new skill. Each skill is identified by the developmental area that is most needed.

Developmental area	Abilities the child needs
Physical skill: Learning to walk (gross motor skill)	
Physical development	➤ Strength in their arms and legs ➤ Balance and coordination
Social development	➤ Appreciation of encouragement provided by others through words and actions ➤ Interest in walking from seeing others walk
Emotional development	➤ Feeling that they are capable of taking risks; they might fall but still need to try ➤ Feeling safe in their environment ➤ Confidence/resilience to try again when they fall ➤ Management of feelings such as frustration and excitement
Cognitive development	➤ Problem-solving to work out how to pull themselves up on furniture, to move along safely and to balance their bodies
Communication development	➤ Able to communicate their needs by holding their hands out, grunting or babbling to gain support from adults ➤ Able to express frustration, excitement and needs ➤ Developing language relating to walking, such as 'walk to me', 'try again', etc.
Physical skill: Writing their name (fine motor skill)	
Physical development	➤ Hand-eye coordination ➤ Able to hold the pencil and control its movements
Social development	➤ A desire to learn to write in order to be connected to others, where writing is important for communication
Emotional development	➤ Patience to keep trying, leading to feelings of success and a growing self-esteem when they succeed
Cognitive development	➤ Understanding the letter symbols and what a word is
Communication development	➤ Realising that the symbols of letters make a word and that others can understand these words too

Developmental area	Abilities the child needs
Social skill: Playing a role in a home setting	
Physical development	➤ Able to complete the tasks of the role, such as pretending to cook, caring for a doll, etc.
Social development	➤ Watching and observing what is happening, then putting actions in place to maintain a relationship with the other children involved
Emotional development	➤ Responding in ways that are part of the play, including pretending to be sad or happy
Cognitive development	➤ Playing out a sequence of actions and using creativity to decide what happens next
Communication development	➤ Communicating their ideas, following directions and expressing themselves
Emotional development: Expressing frustration in an acceptable way	
Physical development	➤ Controlling any inappropriate physical actions
Social development	➤ Letting others know what needs to change or that they are feeling overwhelmed ➤ Understanding how feelings and actions affect others ➤ Knowing what others identify as appropriate emotional expressions
Emotional development	➤ Recognising the feeling of frustration ➤ Identifying when the feeling of frustration is becoming overwhelming
Cognitive development	➤ Thinking through strategies to take ➤ Problem-solving how to manage feelings and how to manage the task ➤ Identifying what the appropriate behaviour alternatives are ➤ Recognising the consequences of different behaviours and choosing which is most suitable for the situation
Communication development	➤ Being able to communicate frustration to others and get help to resolve the situation
Cognitive skill: Solving a puzzle	
Physical development	➤ Able to hold the puzzle pieces and manipulate them in different ways to fit
Social development	➤ Ability to ask questions and get help ➤ Interest in achieving what others are able to
Emotional development	➤ Feelings of wanting to succeed ➤ Management of frustration and ability to persevere when the puzzle gets challenging

Developmental area	Abilities the child needs
Cognitive development	➤ Being able to recognise the end picture ➤ Understanding of shape, size and how the pieces fit together and align ➤ Understanding that the parts or pieces make a whole picture
Communication development	➤ Asking for help ➤ Knowing and learning words to express their task, such as 'line up', 'turn around', 'fit into', etc.
Communication skill: Asking a question	
Physical development	➤ Control of the mouth to express words ➤ Body language to express language used
Social development	➤ Willingness and interest in interacting with others
Emotional development	➤ Confidence to approach the other person and ask the question ➤ Feeling that their question is valid
Cognitive development	➤ Understanding what a question is ➤ Interest in finding our information ➤ Understanding that others have information they are interested in
Communication development	➤ Knowing how to phrase a question ➤ Knowing when to ask a question ➤ Understanding others' responses

✎ Practice Task 2

1. Which of the following environmental influences could lead to poor early childhood development? Select all that apply.

☐ Poor diet

☐ Speaking two languages at home

☐ Limited resources and materials

☐ Living in a large family

☐ Limited play and stimulation of the brain

☐ Lack of emotional support

☐ Trauma, including abuse and family violence

2. Which of the following statements about development are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

   a. Scaffolding is used to build on children's learning and support them to develop new skills. It can be used when spontaneous teachable moments occur.   * Yes   * No

   b. All children will meet their developmental milestones at the same age.   * Yes   * No

   c. Holistic learning is about noticing and providing experiences for children that give them opportunities to develop in all areas.   * Yes   * No

   d. A child's growth and brain development is influenced by genetics and the environment. Maturation is influenced by the experiences that are provided to children.   * Yes   * No

   e. A child's development is only influenced by their genetics – the environment in which they are living has no impact.   * Yes   * No

   f. Educators can find out anything they want to about children's development by doing an online search. All websites are trustworthy and reliable.   * Yes   * No

3. Which of the following statements reflect the expected developmental milestones of a child who is two and a half years old? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Listens to stories

   ☐ Dresses with help

   ☐ Learns to smile

   ☐ Less willing to share than at an earlier age

   ☐ Writes letters and words

1C Strategies for supporting development

The environment should cater for all domains of a child's development; this should include supporting their curiosity.

Children are excited by new ideas, whether they are sparked by their own interests, or by the interests of others. New ideas give you the chance to provide children with opportunities for learning. A natural outcome of this, is that you will build on the learning you notice as the child develops knowledge that complements current understanding.

Environments for development

When considering the choices children have for play and leisure, view the environment from their perspective and consider all spaces of equal value.

Children undertake activities both indoors and outdoors, so both of these areas should be considered when supporting their development.

Cultural priorities such as education, play, language, rituals and religious beliefs all affect the way you present experiences, how you communicate with others and the importance you place on various play and leisure decisions. These same cultural priorities affect the type of play that children engage in. In addition, children need to be provided with spaces to meet their needs for privacy, solitude and quiet.

Encourage children's curiosity, knowledge and ideas.

Everyone experiences emotions to different degrees. People may even experience different emotions relating to the same event. Children use cues to communicate their emotions. Your response to these emotions is crucial – the way you respond can have a long-lasting effect and may influence a child's self-esteem throughout their life. By providing valuable attention, feedback and guided challenges, as well as spaces for children to be alone or have quiet time to relax, wind down or rest. These opportunities influence and support a child's emerging sense of self.

Your attitude toward children and how they learn has a strong influence on how you plan the environment and provide opportunities for exploring, understanding and solving problems. An attitude that includes the belief that children are confident and involved learners (EYLF Outcome 4) means that you believe that children are capable and interested, and that they should be challenged and provided with opportunities to learn and explore.

There are many experiences that provide children with maximum exposure to communication. The value of these experiences relies on you being a positive model and interacting frequently with children. When communication is modelled to children, their self-esteem increases as they are learning naturally without being corrected.

Indoor activities

Indoor environments are used for many purposes by children of all ages.

The way children are grouped may affect how you set up spaces. For example, you may group children by age range or by family groupings where the ages are mixed.

When examining these groupings, your knowledge of children's physical development at various ages may be challenged as you identify appropriate environments and experiences.

Infants and toddlers

Infants and toddlers usually use indoor areas for:

➤ discovery – exploring interesting items safely with their senses
➤ climbing
➤ wheeling or pulling toys
➤ manipulative play
➤ block play.

Most activity areas for infants are arranged on the floor rather than on tables so they have easy access.

Preschoolers

Preschoolers benefit from indoor activities such as:

➤ dramatic play
➤ blocks
➤ books, language and listening centre activities
➤ puzzles, threading and construction sets
➤ clay modelling, painting and drawing
➤ sand and water play
➤ woodwork
➤ cooking.

Outdoor activities

The outdoor space requires the same level of consideration as the indoor space; there should be opportunities for all areas of development.

Almost every experience that can be set up inside is a valuable opportunity for learning in the outdoor environment. This can be exciting for children and may renew their interests in an activity.

Outdoor play spaces need to be clearly defined so children can immediately see how the space can be used. They should have easy access so that children can move between spaces and activities without interfering with others. Stepping-stones and other natural features can provide children with creative options for play.

Outdoor spaces should have the potential to rearrange equipment, change the location of activities, add or remove items, and provide either simple or complex play arrangements. Consider providing the following items:

> wooden planks
> car tyres
> small ladders
> A-frames
> outdoor blocks
> cable reels
> off-cut logs.

If you provide the appropriate props for children, they can create the type of play experience they want to participate in for themselves. This allows for active hands-on play where children can experiment and explore.

If possible, children should be provided with the opportunity to move indoors and outdoors as they please. Your staff ratios and service design will determine whether this is an option for you.

Entering play

An educator's ability to judge when and how to enter a play situation is a skill that is developed over time.

Here are some useful strategies you can use:

> If you feel it is necessary to show a child how to use a particular piece of equipment or tool, join in the play and model how this is done rather than stopping the play and directing the child.
> When you are invited into play, do so in a subtle manner. After some time passes, it may be appropriate to provide suggestions to enhance and extend the play. Avoid taking over and directing.
> Older children may show interest in learning a craft or a game. Once the skills are established, you can leave the play to the children.
> When you provide support and extensions to play, children remain engaged for longer periods and can find a broader range of options for their play. You might add new props, suggest a larger or smaller space, or add a new idea about the topic of play.
> Support negotiation, problem-solving and conflict resolution as needed without interrupting the play.

The roles that you take when entering a play situation are shown in the following table.

Role	What it involves
Observer	Watching the play
Provider	Supplying materials and resources
Mediator	Resolving conflicts and suggesting options
Player	Joining in the play

Challenge, curiosity and discovery

Experiences that provide challenges, curiosity and discovery are ones that stimulate the whole of the child.

They encourage:

> physical skills to carry out experiences and to touch, feel and manipulate

> social skills to watch, observe and learn from others

> emotional skills to feel safe exploring and finding out when new experiences and ideas can be unpredictable

> cognitive skills to explore, to make sense of what is happening, problem-solve and work things out

> communication skills to ask questions, listen, follow instructions and discuss the experience.

Encourage challenge, curiosity and discovery by providing different experiences for children to investigate and explore.

Children are more likely to be engaged in activities that reflect their interests and strengths. They are also more likely to maintain a sense of agency, or enthusiasm, when they participate in planning activities and are inspired to be curious.

The following table presents some ideas for providing challenge, curiosity and discovery for children of each age group.

Age group	Ideas to provide challenge, curiosity and discovery
Infant	> Feeling box: a box containing different textured materials > Blanket made of various fabrics such as felt, fur, hessian, silk, wool and leather > Ice with a large object inside, such as a toy dinosaur > Big clam shell or box of shredded paper to explore
Toddler	> Sand tray/pit with natural resources such as pebbles, gumnuts and pinecones > Farm animals > Different-sized boxes with various objects inside
Preschooler	> Paint for colour mixing > Containers with different surprise objects inside – guess what's inside? > Volcanoes made with bicarb soda and vinegar

Challenge

Children need to be challenged, but it can be difficult to get the balance right. If the activity or experience is too easy, the child may become bored; if it is too hard they may become frustrated.

When evaluating the appropriateness of an experience, look at how the children could be extended slightly beyond their current development. Never wait for the children to become bored or lose concentration before increasing the challenge. Look at the ease of their participation and consider whether extension is required.

Any ideas you have for modification and even suggestions from the children should be acted on, these are great ways to extend the children's development, further enrich the experience and increase their interest levels.

When all activities and experiences are given equal thought and consideration in presentation and reasoning, children will be interested and intrigued by the choices they have.

Curiosity and engagement

When initiating a new activity or experience, use curiosity as a tool to encourage participation.

Curiosity is about experimenting, exploring, and asking why or how. It will lead children through learning as they use trial and error to work things out, experiment and develop new ideas. Trial and error is sometimes seen as children making mistakes. However, it is a valuable process as it allows children to see what does and does not work, as well as how different approaches can affect an outcome.

Engagement is not just about getting children to complete an activity. It is about getting them to explore, experiment and be engrossed in what they are doing. Engagement is the process rather than the product. You will know when you have engaged a child's interest because they will concentrate on the activity, ask questions and stay involved for some time.

Example
Engaging children

Hester, the educator, sets up a new activity. He provides marbles, paper and paint. He also places trays on the table.

Hester thinks about how to engage children. He plans to pique the children's curiosity and creativity through his interactions. Instead of telling the children, 'This is marble painting and this is how it is done', Hester says things like 'Can you work out how to use these things?' and 'What do you think you could do with these?'

Creating and implementing experiences

You will be responsible for setting up and implementing experiences.

These experiences will be developed following the planning cycle (outlined in Section 1A).

In an environment where equipment, games and toys are accessible, children will feel a sense of success when they are able to complete a task by themselves. Children develop their self-esteem when they feel confident in their own abilities and believe that you have confidence in them.

Preparing the environment for play involves five main aspects:

> time
> space
> resources (materials and equipment)
> people
> safety.

Providing time

Children feel emotionally secure when their days are unhurried and when they have uninterrupted periods of time to explore their interests.

When children are rushed through their day they begin to act and feel like the world is a stressful and demanding place. Educators must remember that the time a child spends in an education and care setting is time that is forming their experience of life.

The time children are with you must be unhurried; children should be able to experiment and develop skills at their own pace. Children need to be allowed time to relax, to be upset and to express themselves without feeling they are holding others up or that they are responsible for the needs or activities of others.

Children need time to:

> learn new skills and practise developing them
> become skilled at personal care tasks
> feel confident that their attempts are valued and encouraged
> just 'be' – not learning in readiness for whatever is coming next, but just enjoying what they like and how they want to do something in the moment
> form relationships
> express themselves and explore their feelings
> make choices, be involved, change direction and become involved again.

Children need the time to be able to explore, problem-solve and find out about their world. They learn from play and from using everyday events to explore the world. Children's learning is interrupted if they are given short periods of time to explore. It is also less meaningful if their learning is cut short. Children who know they will have the time they need to problem-solve through finding out, exploring and completing investigations, will become more involved in in-depth learning and will feel better supported.

Social play and leisure time must be unhurried and uninterrupted. When children are rushed through play they don't have an opportunity to be fully involved in the experience and may become frustrated. Children also need time to interact in unplanned activities.

It is also important for communication to be unhurried and uninterrupted. When children are rushed through communication they don't have an opportunity to engage with another person and may become frustrated or stop communicating altogether. Children need time to think about what they want to say, to change that into words or actions, then to share this. They often need time to consider questions and to form answers.

When children have time to complete routine tasks, this gives them an opportunity to experiment with materials and skills.

Arranging space

The arrangement of space in the service is under your control and should be adapted to suit children's needs.

You may use spaces that are designed specifically for children to gain and practise skills, or you may occupy a space that is shared by adults and has adult-sized equipment and facilities.

Over-stimulating spaces might be enjoyable and functional for short periods of time. However, many children are spending long hours in an education and care setting. This means that spaces need to provide for many different times, emotions and needs. Spaces that are multifunctional and provide for a range of opportunities are most suitable. The impression gained from this space should be that it is welcoming, relaxing, attractive and that it belongs to the children.

Make sure children have enough space to play and explore.

The environment should be arranged so that children have a clear indication of where and how they can complete their tasks. Children might need larger areas to work, including larger pieces of paper. They use larger muscle movements, so their print and drawing takes more room. Materials should be well-displayed, and the equipment and materials a child needs to complete tasks should be safe, age-appropriate and in good condition.

Look at the space from a child's point of view; every aspect sends a message to children about how they should participate. Make sure these messages are encouraging.

When planning how to use space, remember that children need:

➤ hands-on experiences
➤ opportunities to be alone
➤ opportunities to work with others
➤ challenges
➤ safety and security
➤ opportunities to explore
➤ to see themselves reflected in the environment and get a feeling that the space is theirs
➤ to express themselves and know they will be accepted and understood.

All children need times and spaces that allow for their need to have privacy, solitude and quiet times. You can provide for this by including areas that are secluded, apart from loud activity, set out with comfortable and cosy furniture, or accommodate just one child in an experience.

The following table provides more detail about these aspects.

Hands-on experiences	➤ To explore, touch, smell, move and create – not only in play but also when undertaking routine activities.
Opportunities to be alone	➤ To concentrate and not be distracted ➤ To take a break when feeling tired or over-stimulated
Challenges	➤ To offer opportunities to improve skills ➤ To invite children to complete tasks at their own level with adult support when required
Safety and security	➤ To have the chance to explore and learn while feeling and being safe

You can provide spaces that meet children's needs by considering the following points.

What to provide	How to provide it
Opportunities	➤ The type of play should be appropriate for the child's age. ➤ Opportunities for each social play stage should be offered to older children. ➤ When children are in a group all day, every day, they may become tired and over-stimulated, so they need some quiet time.
Choices	➤ The space available should help children choose to do something that interests them; therefore, there must be sufficient play spaces available for children to have a choice of two or three activities or experiences.

What to provide	How to provide it
Challenges	➤ The space should offer a variety of possibilities and should encourage children to think creatively, solve problems and make decisions.
	➤ The space should be flexible to allow children to participate in self-created play, or to mix two or more play experiences. For example, children may move the animals in the sandpit to the block area and extend their own play.
Safety and security	➤ The space should be safe and secure without making the children feel over-protected – it is important to find a balance between safety and healthy risk-taking.

Resources

Resources include furniture, equipment and materials for activities and experiences.

The resources you choose to make available to children have a huge influence on the quality and types of skills children use during daily routines.

It is important that resources:

➤ match the children's interests, needs and abilities

➤ are appropriate for the number of children

➤ are good quality

➤ are hygienic and safe

➤ are open-ended, meaning they can be used in many different ways

➤ are challenging, intriguing and offer discovery

➤ investigate concepts

➤ are designed to complete a task; for example, sharpened pencils for drawing and writing.

These resources allow the child to find out many things for themselves through problem-solving, exploration and experimentation. Learning is extended if there is space to spread out, to complete ideas, to have no interruptions and try different things. This also allows children to cooperate and share ideas.

On the other hand, you may set up or notice that resources are too few or not suitable in their current form. This provides an opportunity for children to work out what to do, to remedy a situation or to create their own ideas using what is available.

People

As well as being part of a broader community, your service is a community itself.

The service location and specific cultural priorities affect the way you present your routines, how you communicate these to others and what priority you place on various physical routine tasks. Religion and country of origin can also have an influence as majority groups often request services that cater to their specific needs. For example, families may feel that educational programs are important, or that play and leisure should be emphasised.

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Ensure there are enough educators to meet educator–child ratios.

The qualifications and experience of the adults working with children, the educator–child ratios and how educators are positioned to ensure children's safety and wellbeing while they complete tasks, all affect how the program is presented. Consider how educators are positioned to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. Each educator needs space and time to be able to interact with children, to enhance social play, model appropriate behaviour and to extend play where possible.

Communication

Communication requires at least two people to be involved.

The quality of each person's skills influences the effectiveness of the interaction. Modelling is the best method you can use to demonstrate these skills. Development is boosted when you encourage environments with lots of conversation, stimulation and supported problem-solving.

Children can become frustrated trying to make sense of new things and attempting to work out how complicated things happen. They may make up ideas or misinterpret outcomes if they are not supported. To help this process of learning, you can scaffold children's skills by:

> recognising problems and challenges
> clarifying goals
> helping children to plan strategies
> asking open-ended questions
> providing new ideas and challenges
> answering questions and finding solutions
> supporting exploration
> talking about routines and choices
> supporting families to provide learning environments at home.

Safety

The EYLF highlights belonging, being and becoming as fundamental to a child's life.

For children to experience a sense of belonging, being and becoming, they must feel safe. Without safety and security, a child (or any person) is less able to explore, express themselves and feel able to develop relationships. They will be uncertain of the outcome of emotions and will not develop healthy attachments; instead they will be anxious, afraid and emotionally challenged.

Inconsistent emotional support or comfort and the experience of trauma result in poor early childhood development. This not only affects the child during these periods of growth, it also influences their future ability, understanding and emotional competence.

Your knowledge of child development and the individual abilities of children allow you to observe the environment and identify how to make it safe. Consider the developmental abilities of children, such as their:

> understanding of safety and danger
> spontaneous behaviour
> ability to follow limits and guidelines
> curiosity
> interest in adult-modelled behaviour
> level of independence
> mobility and balance
> understanding of consequences
> ability to share.

Learning often involves taking risks as children experiment and explore. This means that educators are required to supervise closely and develop a balance between safe and unsafe risk-taking. While this means physically watching and being close, it also means supporting children to learn how to be safe themselves and understand the difference between safe and unsafe behaviour.

When setting limits, support the children to set these themselves or explain them to children as part of the learning process.

Providing for physical development

The following table illustrates how you can set up the environment for the physical development of children of different ages.

Age	Interaction examples	What to provide
0–3 months	> Display delight, encouragement and enthusiasm for children's attempts. > Imitate the infant's vocalisations and facial expressions, e.g. coo, smile and yawn back.	> Rattles and mobiles > Supportive and safe layback seating > Tummy time on a mat
3–6 months	> Play peek-a-boo. > Recite songs and rhymes, e.g. 'This little piggy went to market'.	> Low mirrors at a child's eye level > Basket of different textures to feel > Tummy time on mat

Age	Interaction examples	What to provide
6–12 months	➤ As infant points to things, name them, e.g. 'eyes', 'bottle', names of other children.	➤ Large soft blocks and stacking cups ➤ Large piece puzzles with handles ➤ Noise-making play equipment, such as drums or saucepan lids ➤ Open safe space for the child to roll and crawl around ➤ Low mirrors at a child's eye level ➤ Low furniture for the child to pull themselves up on
1–2 years	➤ Repeat sounds and words back to the child. ➤ Read simple books with the child.	➤ Thick crayons and large pieces of paper ➤ Push and pull-along toys and abacus beads ➤ Large piece puzzles with handles ➤ Noise-making play equipment, such as drums and saucepan lids ➤ Balls and bean bags to throw and roll ➤ Board books
2–3 years	➤ Read books with the child. ➤ Participate in action songs and dancing.	➤ Books ➤ Wooden puzzles ➤ Large blocks or Duplo ➤ Enough space to allow children to play chasey ➤ Balls and tricycles ➤ Forks and spoons for the child to use at mealtimes ➤ Scissors, paper and chunky pencils and textas ➤ Painting with chunky brushes
3–5 years	➤ Join in games and conversations. ➤ Encourage children's efforts, e.g. 'Well done', 'Good try', 'Keep going', etc.	➤ Hoops ➤ Obstacle course ➤ Pencils, paper, scissors and craft items ➤ Equipment for ball games: basketball ring, soccer net, cricket bat and ball, etc.

Providing for social development

Example
Providing for physical development

Andrea and Eric decide they wanted to build a big castle from blocks. Parneet, the educator, notices they are working together and that their building is getting quite large. Parneet comments on how hard they are working and asks if they would like to have some more space. She moves the baskets and shifts the shelf back further to allow them room to extend their castle.

The castle starts to become quite tall. Parneet reminds the children that the building must be lower than their shoulders so they will be safe if it falls over. She suggests that they could make some flags to go up high. Andrea and Eric are very excited about this idea and move to the craft table to begin making flags.

The following table outlines how you can set up the environment for the social development of children of different ages.

Age	Interaction examples	What to provide
0–6 months	➢ Smile back at infant. ➢ Recite 'Round and round the garden' with actions.	➢ Knee bouncing games with infant ➢ Low mirror at child's height
6–12 months	➢ Talk about what the child is doing, e.g. 'You're on the phone. Say, "Hi Mum".' ➢ Acknowledge how children are feeling, e.g. 'You're feeling sad, aren't you, because we have to come inside for lunch?'	➢ Toy phone ➢ Tea set ➢ Dolls, blankets, cradle ➢ Photos of self and family members ➢ Reading nook or area ➢ Large comfortable cushions on the floor in a circle
1–2 years	➢ Talk about members of the family, pets and special events.	➢ Photos of self and family members ➢ Story time ➢ Sand play

Age	Interaction examples	What to provide
2–3 years	- Model positively, offer choices where possible. - Involve children in daily routines, such as helping to set up the lunch table. - Sing songs to learn names, routines or body parts.	- Home corner – supermarket set-up with groceries, cash register, shopping bags and handbags - Multiple toys to avoid difficulty with sharing - Cubby house - Play dough - Any table activity that can have two or more participants - Large wooden blocks - Songs with actions
3–5 years	- Involve children in decision-making and choices. - Sometimes join in play, taking on a role.	- Puppet theatre - Simple board games and card games - Dress-ups - Doll house with people - Gardening - Group games such as 'Duck-Duck-Goose'

Example
Providing for social development

A group of four children are outdoors in the yard talking about the fire truck that just drove past with its lights and sirens flashing. Tamara says, 'Let's all be firefighters and rush to the fire.' The other children agree and begin running around the yard in all directions. Sasha, the educator, notices this play and goes over to the children. 'Would you like firefighter hats, jackets and hoses so you can put out the fire? You might need to have the proper equipment.' The children excitedly follow Sasha to the outdoor shed.

Sasha finds four helmets, but she can only find two pieces of rope to use as hoses. 'But there are four of us, we need four hoses,' says Hayley. 'Not all firefighters have a hose each. How do you think they work together to put out fires?' asks Sasha. 'They have two firefighters holding the hose together because it is so heavy. I can see a fire over there by the cubby house.' Sasha knows this would direct the children to one area rather than running all over the yard with the rope. 'Let's go!' shouts Tamara.

Providing for emotional development

The following table outlines how you can set up the environment for the emotional development of children of different ages.

Age	Interaction examples	Experience examples
0–6 months	➤ Sing lullabies while gently rocking or swaying the infant. ➤ Pick up on the infant's cues and verbally say what they are expressing, e.g. 'You're hungry and want your bottle now.' ➤ Use infant's name during experiences, e.g. 'Jack's smiling. You like the rattle that makes noise.'	➤ Help the infant to clap their hands to a song, e.g. 'If you're happy and you know it' or 'Everybody clapping, clapping… just like me'. ➤ Provide photos of self and family members. ➤ Provide board books and stories.
6–12 months	➤ Establish a routine of separation. ➤ Make frequent physical contact according to the infant's preferences, such as cuddling, sitting them on your knee or rubbing their back.	➤ Allow the infant time to get to know new people by using 'transition actions' – using an object to gain the infant's interest such as a special toy.
1–2 years	➤ Play games where the child points to self, people and familiar objects; for example, 'Where's Sophie?', 'Where is the horse?'	➤ Hide a familiar toy in an obvious place and encourage the child to find it; clap and cheer when found.
2–3 years	➤ Acknowledge the child's efforts with comments like, 'Good listening' or 'Thank you for helping pack the toys away.'	➤ Find out what the child's interests are and set up activities to match them, such as painting or playing dinosaurs.
3–5 years	➤ Encourage the child to state how they are feeling by asking, 'How do you feel when …?' ➤ Involve the child in decision-making. ➤ Model the words to say, e.g. 'Tom, may I please have a turn?'	➤ Provide for dramatic play and play experiences.

Providing for cognitive development

The following table outlines how you can set up the environment for the cognitive development of children of different ages.

Age	Interaction examples	What to provide
0–6 months	➤ While holding the infant, make faces and babble and coo sounds back to them.	➤ Provide pictures of people, animals or their family at eye level. ➤ Provide toys with contrasting colours, such as black, white and red toys.
6–12 months	➤ Talk about everyday things, actions and sounds that are occurring; for example, 'Can you hear the doorbell?'; 'Listen to the music'.	➤ Provide simple picture books with thick pages. ➤ Provide pop-up toys, rattles and stacking cups. ➤ Blow bubbles.
1–2 years	➤ Ask children to point out body parts, e.g. 'Where's your nose?'	➤ Provide a shape sorting box or post box to place objects inside. ➤ Hide familiar objects and encourage children to look for them.
2–3 years	➤ Ask children questions starting with who, what, where, when, why and how, e.g. 'What could we do with these icy pole sticks?'	➤ Provide sorting, matching and naming activities. ➤ Provide water play with measuring cups. ➤ Provide dramatic and imaginary play props such as empty boxes and smooth stones. ➤ Provide puzzles with three to six pieces.
3–5 years	➤ Sing number songs, such as 'Ten little ducks'. ➤ Act out familiar stories like 'We're going on a bear hunt'.	➤ Provide hand puppets. ➤ Allow for open-ended painting, drawing and pasting activities. ➤ Provide dramatic play areas. ➤ Provide sorting games. ➤ Provide peg boards. ➤ Play simple card games such as 'Snap'. ➤ Provide building blocks. ➤ Read stories. ➤ Use technologies such as tablets, digital cameras or laptops with educational activities. ➤ Use tools such as telescopes, microscopes and magnifying glasses.

Example

Providing for cognitive environment

Two children are at a trough half-filled with water that is set up with several different recycled bottles and cups inside. Annie begins pouring the water from one cup to the other. She then fills one of the bottles with water and watches it sink. 'When it's full of water it sinks to the bottom!' she exclaims. 'That's right!' says the educator, Debra. 'Why do you think it sinks when it is full but not when it's empty?' Annie thinks about this. 'Because it is heavy?' Debra smiles and says, 'You're right, the water makes it heavy. What other things might we be able to find in the room that are heavy?' Annie finds other items and together they test which things sink and which things float. They explore other properties that cause items to sink or float.

Providing for communication development

The following table outlines how you can set up the environment for the communication development of children of different ages.

Age	Interaction examples	Experience examples
0–6 months	➤ When the infant coos, coo back. ➤ During interactions, use the infant's name.	➤ Sing nursery rhymes. ➤ Face the infant, talk and sing softly. ➤ Move a hand puppet in front of the infant, then hold it still and see if the infant makes sounds to encourage it to move again.
6–12 months	➤ Attend and respond to non-verbal communication, e.g. 'I can see you don't like the taste of pumpkin.' ➤ Encourage and acknowledge words spoken and repeat to the child, e.g. if the child says 'dink' for drink, respond, 'Here is your drink.' ➤ Name familiar objects seen throughout the day such as 'car', 'doll', 'ball', etc. ➤ Point to and name objects in books, e.g. 'tall tree', 'brown cat', etc.	➤ Use a cushion or scarf to play peek-a-boo. ➤ Sing 'My hands are clapping' while helping infants to clap their hands. ➤ Talk to the child about the routine and what's happening at nappy-change times and mealtimes.

Age	Interaction examples	Experience examples
1–2 years	➤ Put words to objects and emotions: 'Looks like you're feeling happy/sad/excited/frustrated.' ➤ Introduce new words. ➤ Give the child time to speak and listen.	➤ Model the sounds of vehicles or animals as you play with toys. ➤ Look through a photo album of children's family members.
2–3 years	➤ Give two-part instructions, e.g. 'Put your drawing in your bag, then come sit on the mat.' ➤ Sing action songs, such as 'Three cheeky monkeys'.	➤ Encourage social situations and small group play with others, e.g. dramatic play of a kitchen set-up such as pretend food. ➤ Use water play to talk about mathematical concepts of weight, height, temperature, length and numbers.
3-5 years	➤ When reading stories, involve children by asking, 'What do you think might happen next?' ➤ Listen to children's questions and stories.	➤ Provide building blocks for children to work in small groups. ➤ Encourage interaction with peers. ➤ Provide activities such as show and tell and puppet shows.

✏ Practice Task 3

1. Two children are building with blocks. Draw a line to match the area of development to the actions of the children.

* Communication development

* Cognitive development

* Emotional development

* Physical development

* Social development

* Each child encourages the work of the other.

* The roof is difficult to build. One child wants to make a flat roof, the other encourages more ideas.

* One child is frustrated and wants to take time to rest and relax on their own before further problem-solving.

* One child describes the type of roof they want to make.

* The children press the blocks together and pull them apart.

2. Draw a line to match each aspect of the physical environment with the corresponding example.

    * Space

    * Resources

    * Safety

    * Time

    * People

    * The educator is patient while the child practises the skill of taking their own shoes and socks off at bedtime.

    * The educator has asked three children to wash their hands. There are three taps.

    * The educator has put tongs and a small half-filled jug of water on the table at lunchtime to allow the children to serve themselves.

    * Educators position themselves both indoors and outdoors to allow the children to have the choice of where to play.

    * The educator positions herself next to the young child in a low chair at lunchtime and ensures that the child is constantly supervised while feeding himself.

3. Identify one experience that could provide an opportunity for children to be curious, challenged, and to experience curiosity and discovery.

    .

    .

    .

Summary

- The National Quality Framework (NQF) and its components guide educators toward understanding child development.
- Laws, regulations, standards, policies and procedures all cover the areas of:
  - educational program and practice
  - children's health and safety
  - physical environment
  - relationships with children.
- Educators follow a planning cycle that is informed by knowledge of child development.
- When sourcing information about child development, check this is from an authoritative and credible source.
- Development is influenced by heredity and the environment.
- There are developmental milestones; however, a range of variables means that children develop at different rates.
- Critical periods of learning are times when teachable moments are most beneficial.
- Learning is holistic. While experiences may support one developmental area most, other development is also needed to complete activities.
- When creating experiences and spaces for children, consider time, space, resources, people and safety.
- Children can learn from making mistakes.
- When children are challenged, curious and allowed to discover, they are engaged and enthusiastic.

Learning Checkpoint 1
Holistic learning and development

Part A

1. The children in the following images are aged between birth and three years. Draw a line to match each image with the most prominent area of development.

* Communication development

* Physical development

* Social development

* Emotional development

* Cognitive development

2. The children in the following images are aged between three and five years. Draw a line to match each image with the most prominent area of development.

* Communication development

* Physical development

* Social development

* Emotional development

* Cognitive development

3. Draw a line to match each NQS quality area to its descriptor.

    *   Quality area 1   *   Children's health and safety

    *   Quality area 2   *   Educational program and
                                                practice

    *   Quality area 3   *   Relationships with children

    *   Quality area 5   *   Physical environment

4. Draw a line to match each NQS quality area to the service policy,
    procedure, law or regulation.

    *   Educational program and   *   Active play policy of the
        practice   Education and Care Services
                                                National Law: Section 168 –
                                                Offence relating to required
                                                programs

    *   Relationships with children   *   Providing a child safe
                                                environment policy of the
                                                Education and Care Services
                                                National Law: Section 165
                                                – Offence to inadequately
                                                supervise children

    *   Physical environment   *   Environmental sustainability
                                                policy

    *   Children's health and safety   *   Interactions policy

5. Which of the following statements are correct about development? Select yes or no for each one.

a. What children eat doesn't affect their development. As long as they are never hungry, they will achieve. Development will naturally occur in children regardless of the environment they live in.

   * Yes   * No

b. It doesn't matter if caregivers change regularly as long as someone is always a qualified educator. This meets the EYLF Principle: Partnerships.

   * Yes   * No

c. Children need time to explore and play with a range of materials and resources to allow them to develop in all areas.

   * Yes   * No

d. Children are very resilient and at such a young age they will forget about any trauma, such as abuse or domestic violence, and continue to develop at the same pace.

   * Yes   * No

e. Brain development is impacted by both heredity (nature) and the environment in which a child lives (nurture).

   * Yes   * No

f. Theories about child development are based on information that has been collected and observed. When researching or gathering information, it is important to use authoritative or credible sources, such as ACECQA or AECD.

   * Yes   * No

Part B

Use the following image to answer the questions that follow.

1. Development is interrelated, which makes for a holistic approach. Draw a line to match the developmental area used to the example based on the image.

* Cognitive development	* The children run to the fires and use hoses to put them out.
* Social development	* The children dress in their costumes and work out who will have each role. One child is the fire chief, one is the driver and another is the hose carrier.
* Physical development	* At the fire scene, the children save a teddy bear. They hug the bear and say they will look after it until it gets better.
* Communication development	* The children work out the shortest route to the fire. They measure the hose to check it is long enough to reach from their engine to the fire.
* Emotional development	* The children are not sure about the name of the place where the fire fighters stay. They ask an educator and then make a sign saying, 'Fire Station'.

2. If an educator was watching the children play, they might plan a further experience for them. Number each step from 1 to 5 in the order the educator would follow in the planning cycle.

☐ Reflecting on what happened and how the children demonstrated further development.

☐ Observing the children working as fire fighters and identifying development.

☐ Planning a new experience to meet the children's interests and developmental stage that will scaffold their learning and encourage the children to use interactions to explore and problem-solve.

☐ Selecting materials and implementing the new experience.

☐ Questioning the value of what has been observed and thinking about what the children have learnt while firefighting.

3. Which of the following might occur during this experience? Select all that apply.

☐ One of the children becomes tired. They need a quiet, comfortable space where they can have some privacy.

☐ An educator is not sure if the children should be moving the chairs to make a fire engine. She asks her supervisor if this is acceptable.

☐ When the supervisor returns from a meeting, the educators share what has happened so the experience can be extended.

☐ One child has a learning difficulty. An educator should tell the children not to expect him to be able to understand what they are doing.

☐ An educator recognises a learning opportunity and arranges for the fire department to visit. They will show the children the fire engine, their equipment and answer questions the children have. The educator hopes this will extend their curiosity and encourage discovery
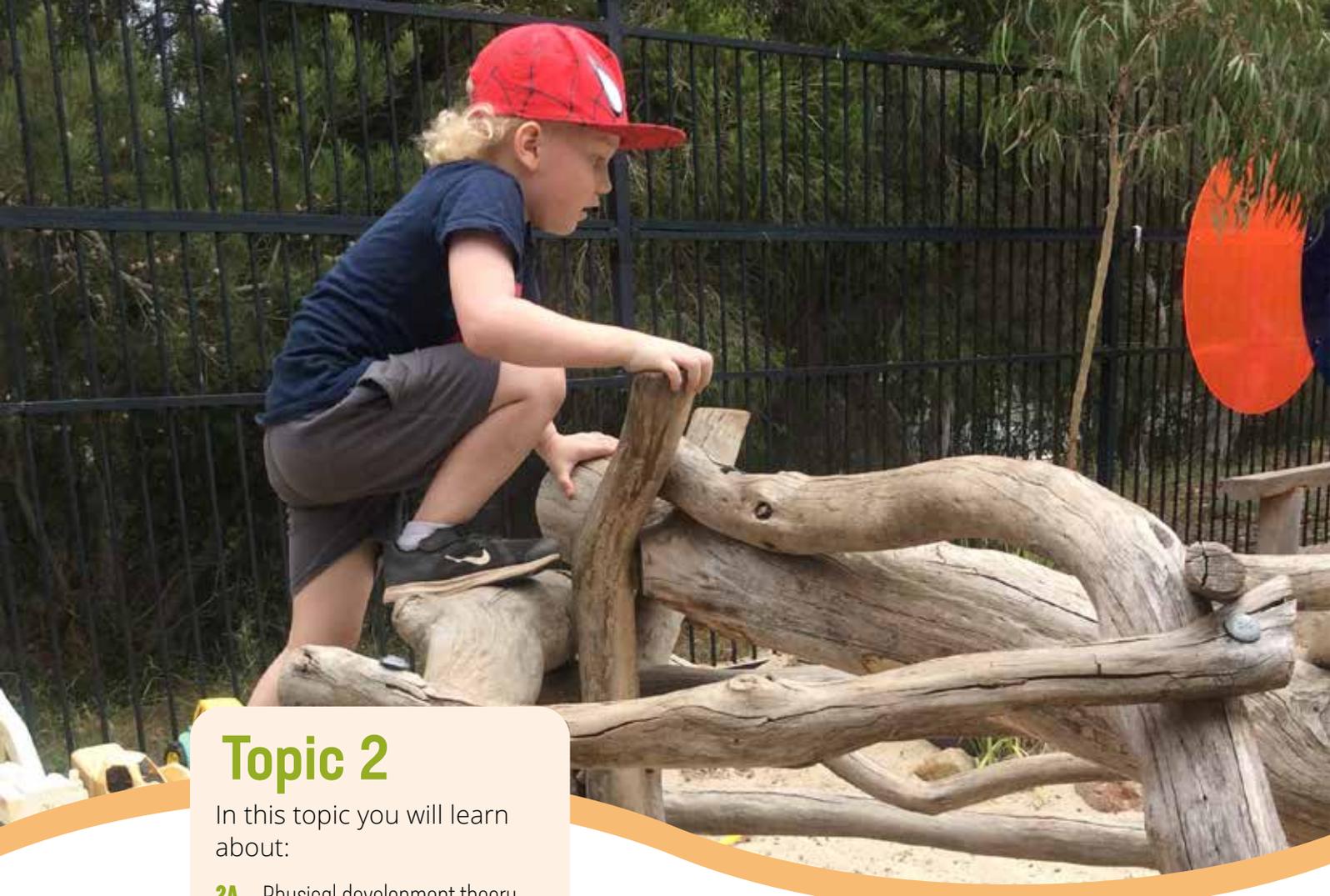
Supporting physical development

Educators promote physical skills by offering a supportive learning environment that builds confidence and offers challenges, exploration and discovery.

Both experiences and daily routines are useful for supporting physical development.

2A Physical development theory

Motor skills are the sequences of movements that occur when muscles of the body are coordinated to perform a particular action.

There are two types of motor skills:

➤ Gross motor skills: Actions that use the large muscles of the body.

➤ Fine motor skills: Actions that use the small muscles of the body.

When you observe the movements that a child makes as they are involved in activity, you can identify whether they are using their gross or fine motor skills.

Gross motor skills

Fundamental movement skills refer to how we use our legs, arms, trunk and head.

Fundamental movement skills include:

➤ sitting up

➤ walking

➤ running

➤ hopping

➤ catching a ball.

These are the foundation movements that are used in more specialised, challenging and complex gross motor (large muscle) actions needed for play, active games, sports, dance, gymnastics and physical recreation activities.

Gross motor skills involve the large muscles of the body that are coordinated to perform an action.

Fundamental movement skills can be divided into three categories:

➤ Body management skills – involving balance

➤ Loco-motor skills – involving moving the body in a direction

➤ Object control skills – involving holding and using objects

Emerging skills are the abilities children are learning. To allow children to practise and develop their emerging gross motor skills, they need access to equipment, games and toys that encourage this. This means supplying equipment to build skills.

The following are examples of equipment that support gross motor and fundamental movement skills and gross motor abilities.

Fundamental movement skills	Actions	Equipment
Body management skills	➤ Bending ➤ Swinging ➤ Climbing ➤ Lifting ➤ Reaching	➤ Climbing frames ➤ Ladders ➤ Steps or stairs ➤ Monkey bars

Fundamental movement skills	Actions	Equipment
Loco-motor skills	➤ Crawling ➤ Walking ➤ Skipping ➤ Jumping ➤ Running ➤ Hopping ➤ Galloping ➤ Side-sliding ➤ Leaping	➤ Indoor space to crawl and walk ➤ Furniture to hold onto ➤ Outdoor space to run, skip and hop ➤ Skipping ropes ➤ Push-along trolleys and prams ➤ Tricycles and bicycles ➤ Trampolines ➤ Stepping stones
Object control skills	➤ Throwing ➤ Catching ➤ Batting ➤ Kicking	➤ Balls ➤ Shovels and spades ➤ Bats ➤ Digging patches ➤ Basketball hoops ➤ Bean bags

Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills involve movements of smaller body parts, such as the wrists, hands, fingers, feet and toes.

Fine motor skills also require hand–eye coordination; that is, coordinating hands to something you see. There are many activities that use hand–eye coordination, including:

➤ writing
➤ doing puzzles
➤ stringing beads
➤ tracing around hands
➤ dressing or undressing dolls
➤ pasting.

To allow children to practise and develop their emerging fine motor skills, they must have access to equipment, games and toys that encourage this.

Supply equipment for fine motor skill development such as:

➤ finger puppets
➤ pasting and painting brushes
➤ scissors
➤ play dough
➤ pencils, pens and markers
➤ staplers
➤ nails and hammers
➤ toy cars
➤ building blocks

➤ cutlery
➤ computer keyboards
➤ books
➤ small sorting items, such as buttons, coins, bottle tops and pebbles
➤ wool for knitting, sewing, stitching and making pom-poms
➤ puzzles.

Materials must be age-appropriate; for example, small items that could pose a choking hazard may not be suitable for younger children.

✏ Practice Task 4

1. Which of the following gross motor activities would you set up to develop fundamental movement skills? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Singing

   ☐ Obstacle course

   ☐ Goal kicking

   ☐ Threading

   ☐ Digging in the sandpit

   ☐ Hopscotch

2. Which of the following activities would you set up to develop emerging fine motor skills? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Puzzles

   ☐ Drawing

   ☐ Skipping rope

   ☐ Walking frame

   ☐ Play dough

   ☐ Cutting and pasting

2B Physical development outcomes

The EYLF learning outcomes have been designed to capture the learning and development that you will observe when working with children from birth to five years.

While milestones of development are sequential and recognise that each child will progress at their own pace, learning outcomes are holistic and are applied to all learning and development.

The approved learning framework, the EYLF, helps you to understand the importance of physical development and helps you work toward supporting children's learning and development.

Regarding physical skills, you will notice that each learning outcome links to the use of physical skills:

EYLF Outcome	Example physical skills
> Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity	Children: > participate in routines > respond to ideas > explore and engage with environments > initiate and join in play > take physical risks
> Outcome 2: Children are connected with, and contribute, to their world	Children: > assist each other > contribute through play and projects > use play to explore ideas > contribute to group outcomes > care for natural and constructed environments
> Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	Children: > show independence > contribute to projects > engage in complex movement patterns > dance, move and act out > explore the world around them > demonstrate spatial awareness > manipulate equipment and manage tools > negotiate play spaces

EYLF Outcome	Example physical skills
> Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners	Children: > investigate > explore the environment > take apart, assemble, construct > manipulate objects > explore tools and media > use information and communication technologies (ICT)
> Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators	Children: > express ideas physically through drama, dance and movement > use props in play > engage with technologies that require gross motor use > speak > see, touch, feel > enact stories > draw, paint, sculpt, write > use information and communication technologies (ICT)

You can research information about the approved learning frameworks at: aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks.

Choice and spontaneity

Children should be able to choose between quiet and active play, and open and private spaces.

They will be fulfilled by having three or more choices that are based on their interests and meet their skill levels. Children will move to different experiences and use them spontaneously in ways they enjoy.

Give children a choice of activities or experiences.

Children will be occupied and learn through play easily when:

> there is a choice of experiences
> they can move to different experiences spontaneously
> the experiences provide challenges
> natural materials are used.

Children will also be provided choice if the materials and equipment are open-ended. Open-ended materials are items that can be used in a number of different ways. They allow children to learn different skills depending on their interests and how they approach the set-up. Open-ended materials are often ones that are natural or recycled that children can explore in their own way.

What to consider when you provide children with choices

> Do they suit the child's ability?

> Can they be adapted to develop with the child?

> Are they based on things the children are interested in?

> Do they allow children to make choices, solve problems and make decisions?

> Can they be changed by the child to meet their interests at the time?

> Are they safe?

> Do they allow appropriate risk-taking behaviour?

> Are supervision and support requirements being met?

> Do the children need assistance to overcome or reduce any frustration?

Example
Providing choices for outdoor play

Adrienne wants to allow the children to choose between a range of active and quiet play experiences outdoors.

For active play she includes:

> an obstacle course with planks at different heights to allow for the different skill levels of the children

> some bean bags and a basket for throwing

> a tent and a camp fire with pots and pans for dramatic play.

For quiet play she includes:

> some books and cushions on a blanket under a tree

> clay on a table with recycled materials.

Daily routines

When children are involved in daily routines and encouraged to develop their independence, they learn about their bodies and how to care for their own health.

Modelling is the main way that children learn, so they will often watch the educator and other children in order to learn skills. Children also listen to what you say and how you react.

The following table gives examples of routine activities that are ideal opportunities for children to:

> gain physical skills and independence

> take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

Mealtimes	Hygiene and self-care	Care for others
- Opening and closing lunch boxes and removing food wrappers - Eating finger food - Feeding themselves using cutlery	- Turning taps on and off - Using brooms and cloths to clean the environment - Dressing and undressing - Cleaning up messes - Washing and drying hands - Using and flushing the toilet	- Serving lunch and pouring drinks - Setting a lunch or snack table

During routines you can communicate positively with children about the following.

Developmental stage	Discussion ideas	Examples
Infant	- Talk about activities, experiences and movements. - Celebrate achievements, such as learning to crawl or walk. - Incorporate song into movement.	'Look at your strong legs.' 'Yes! You are walking!' 'Row, row, row your boat.'
Toddler	- Talk about the activities they are doing. - Describe their movements. - Add words that describe the skills they are developing.	'Good job sweeping the floor.' 'That is a big jump!' 'Now you are running fast!'
Preschooler	- Involve the community through activities and visits. - Talk about their body structures – muscles, bones, eyes, etc. – and how these work. - Discuss individual abilities and achievements. - Invite a dietician to talk about how food makes children strong.	'Milk and cheese provide bones with calcium to make them strong.' 'Hayley jumps very high and Stacey can run fast. They both have strong legs.'

✎ Practice Task 5

Draw a line to match the beginning of each sentence about physical development outcomes to the correct ending.

* Daily routines

* relates to the learning and development you will observe when working with children from birth to five years.

* Modelling

* are opportunities for children to develop their independence and gain physical skills through taking increased responsibility.

* Providing children with choice and spontaneity

* is the main way that children learn – by watching and observing educators and other children.

* Children should be allowed to choose

* will allow them to be more fulfilled and challenged at their skill level.

* Learning Outcome 3 of the EYLF

* between quiet and active play, and open and private spaces.

Summary

➤ Routines are excellent times for children to learn and practise new and emerging skills.

➤ Carefully set up the environment to encourage the development of gross and fine motor skills.

➤ Children benefit from having different choices in physical activity.

➤ The way materials are arranged helps children make choices and create spontaneous ideas for physical play.

➤ Children can be supported to take responsibility for their own physical health and wellbeing by providing them with information and allowing them to practise skills without rushing them.

Learning Checkpoint 2
Supporting physical development

1. Which of the following emerging gross motor and fundamental movement skills are observed in this image? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Holding hands

   ☐ Wearing a hat

   ☐ Balancing

   ☐ Jumping

   ☐ Falling off the board

2. Children develop and practise many physical skills during daily routines. Which of the following fine motor skills are being practised in this image?

   ☐ Eating

   ☐ Using tongs to serve fruit

   ☐ Drinking

   ☐ Cleaning the table

   ☐ Watching others eat

3. The following EYLF outcomes encourage educators to challenge children and encourage choice and spontaneity in physically active play.

   ▶ Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world
   ▶ Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing,

   Which of the following statements explain how these outcomes are met in the above image? Select all that apply.

   ☐ The children are wearing hats and this means the experience is safe.

   ☐ The materials are open-ended, allowing children to use them in imaginative ways.

   ☐ The materials are natural and recycled, and this helps the children become engaged in their experience.

   ☐ The children are closed in their thinking; they are building a tower and this is not imaginative.

   ☐ The children are provided with a range of materials and allowed to work with them in the ways they choose.

Supporting social development

As children engage in play, they develop independence and a sense of achievement, which contributes to their growing self-esteem.

Children's play moves through recognisable stages that reflect their growing sociability, but they also approach play according to their own life experiences and culture.

As an educator, you have an important role in supervising and supporting play. By providing children with the time, space and resources to play, you will stimulate and challenge them individually, and help them learn to interact with and understand others.

3A Social development theory

Children develop many social skills through their play experiences – they learn to cooperate with others, choose activities, make decisions, experience success and deal with failure.

Pretend play helps children explore the world of feelings and relationships. By playing out situations they have seen, children learn about and come to terms with their world, particularly if they are confused by their experiences or do not understand something.

Play enables them to understand their communities and to learn about how others express themselves in different ways. In play, you can see children learning and practising social skills. A typical play experience could involve:

Children learn to share, cooperate and help others in their play.

> taking turns
> sharing
> negotiating
> cooperating
> helping others
> thinking
> setting and following rules and guidelines.

Temperament and personality

Temperament refers to the behavioural characteristics that shape reactions and responses, and is believed to be something that individuals are born with.

The term 'temperament' is often used when discussing infants and toddlers when their natural character dominates. As children develop socially and emotionally, various positive and negative experiences affect them, and they develop a personality that is not based solely on their inborn traits.

There are three types of temperament that relate to young children, as shown in the following table.

Temperament	Characteristics
Easy	> Cheerful > Adaptable > Fits well into routines > Positive in mood

Temperament	Characteristics
Slow to warm up	> Adjusts slowly to new experiences > Tends to be negative in mood > Inactive > Mildly responsive to the world around them
Difficult	> Slow to adapt to new experiences > Strong reactions to change > Irregular routines > Negative in mood > Often withdrawn

You can adapt your interactions and responses to suit a young child's temperament and, later, their personality. You may even be able to assist a young child with a difficult or slow-to-warm-up temperament to become more settled and ready for change.

Temperament and belonging

Ideally, you should match the environment and your interactions with the temperament or personality of a child, and aim to create a feeling of belonging for each child.

When doing this, consider the following.

Sensitivity	How sensitive is each child to particular situations and experiences? Noise, strangers, separation, room temperature, pain, smells, colours and textures all affect us differently, so consider these when plans change.
Activity level	Each child may require a different amount of activity – some children can manage to be active all day without rest, others of the same age require a regular sleep or rest period. Children require quiet and active choices throughout the day, so you will have to be flexible in your daily routine to ensure their needs are catered for.
Adaptability	Constantly changing rooms, staff and routines are disruptive to children and may cause anxiety. When you first meet a child, establish a routine so there are as few changes as possible from day to day. Prepare the child in advance for what is going to happen next. Even very minor changes, such as moving from play to snack or lunch, can cause children to become upset if they are unfamiliar with the routine and unaware of what will occur.

Approach	For children you are unfamiliar with, use a transition action to reduce the impact of a new relationship. This is a strategy that involves using a special toy or ritual to break down the barriers between you and a child.
	Respect a child's need to take things slowly when dealing with new people, places or practices. Rushing things may only cause the child to develop mistrust and create further difficulty in dealing with situations.
	Children who are slow to warm up may need their family member to stay longer than other children, so encourage this to happen.
Attention span	Be realistic in the time you expect a child to concentrate on one activity. In a group of children with varying skill levels, temperaments and personalities, there will be some children who can stick to an activity for a long period of time and others who can maintain only a brief concentration span.
	Arrange your routines and experiences to allow for these differences; in particular, group times should be flexible and suited to the individuals participating.

Example
Encouraging a child who is slow to warm up

As part of extending and scaffolding their learning, Louise, the educator, has put out a craft activity for a group of three-and four-year-olds to support their learning and development. On the table she has scissors, paper of different colours, sticky-tape, pencils and textas. Three of the children are in a discussion about what they are drawing and Chloe (three and a half years) is standing back listening to their conversation.

Louise comes over and sits on a chair at the table. She turns towards Chloe and asks her if she would like to do some drawing or sticking. When Chloe shakes her head but doesn't move away, Louise says to her, 'That's OK, you can draw later if you like. I'm going to do some sticking. Could you help hold some of my pieces on the paper?'

Chloe moves towards Louise and helps by putting her finger on the paper for her. Louise keeps chatting to the other children at the table and including Chloe in the conversation. Soon Chloe has sat down at the table and started her own craft project.

Social play types

Like physical development, social development has stages. People who study children's play have noted differences between children of different ages and classified them into different play types.

For example, a two-year-old doesn't yet have the social skills to play effectively with others, whereas a four-year-old happily plays in a group.

Theorist Mildred Parten defined types of play to reflect social features. She identified the following types of play.

Play type	Characteristics	Examples	Opportunities to engage children in this play
Solitary play	Solitary play is when children are playing alone and do not have any social contact with others. Solitary play is mostly seen in children under two years, but older children may also be seen engaging in solitary play as they enjoy time alone to pursue their individual interests.	When a baby explores a chew toy. Older children may play alone at a dolls house or drive a toy car around on the mat.	An environment set up for solitary play should have experiences that are for one child only, such as a pop-up toy, a sensory mat or a puzzle. Space should be provided that is suitable for one child, such as a small table with one chair, a cushion with an activity or an easel to work at.
Parallel play	Between two and three years of age, children begin to enjoy being near others and participating in the same experience. Although they are still self-centred and are usually unable to share or talk with others very much, they may imitate a child nearby by playing in the same manner. Older children may choose to play side-by-side in parallel play, even though they have the skills to play together.	When two three-year-olds are at the play dough table, both squeezing and poking the dough, but not interacting with each other.	To set up for parallel play, you should provide experiences that allow small groups of children to work on the same or similar play experiences independently, such as: ➤ puzzles ➤ collages (cutting and pasting) ➤ car mats ➤ blocks ➤ painting ➤ drawing ➤ hammering ➤ a sandpit.

Play type	Characteristics	Examples	Opportunities to engage children in this play
Associative play 	Associative play usually starts when children are at early preschool age and are beginning to associate with each other. As a child's language skills improve, they become more aware of other children and better able to communicate. A child may play with others, speak briefly to them, laugh with them and react to them. Although these children are playing together, you will find their interactions are brief and the play episode may not last very long.	In associative play, children may borrow and lend toys, and laugh together without actually cooperating or playing with common ideas in mind. Early superhero play is often observed at an associative play level as groups of children 'fly' around and deal with emergencies. However, the play isn't organised and the children don't talk together about plots or characters.	To encourage associative play, you can provide experiences that require children to share materials with others; for example: ➤ car mats ➤ block corners ➤ dress-up areas ➤ props for imaginative play such as toy cars, hats, clothes, bikes and dolls.
Cooperative play 	By late preschool age, children become less focused on themselves and their interest in other children increases. Because their language is becoming more complex, their interactions with other children usually last longer as they begin to share ideas and solve problems together. They enjoy taking the roles of leader or follower, and they give roles to each other in their play. Because children are working together and the play is lasting longer, this is called cooperative play.	In cooperative play, children arrange plots and give directions to others such as, 'You be the dad, I'll be the mum. Joey can be the baby.' Plots will be discussed and played out; for example, 'Now you go to the table and I will come in and serve dinner.'	You can encourage cooperative play by providing for role-play, and imaginative or dramatic activities. You may include dress-ups, cubbies, home furniture and other props that children can use. Car mats, block corners and dress-up areas all provide children with the opportunity for cooperative play.

Play type	Characteristics	Examples	Opportunities to engage children in this play
Play with rules	Older preschool and early primary school children become interested in more structured games; that is, games with clearly defined rules. Children choose to play these games during their leisure time with any number of friends.	Games with rules include: ➤ board games and tabletop games ➤ games played in lines or circles ➤ games with balls, bats or marbles ➤ skipping games ➤ hopscotch ➤ cricket ➤ football.	You can help support play with rules by ensuring materials and equipment are in good order and readily available to children. Most play with rules requires space and an understanding of the rules of play.
Unoccupied play	Children of all ages can become involved in unoccupied play, when the child is not playing, but is occupied by watching anything that happens to be of momentary interest.	The child may play with their body or clothes, get on and off chairs, stand around, follow an educator or sit in one spot glancing around the room.	Unoccupied play may not seem important, but you must respect a child's decision not to participate, and see the value in a child's observation of an environment and the people in it.
Onlooker play	A child who spends time watching other children at play is using onlooker play. Children of all ages can become involved in onlooker play. This type of play differs from unoccupied play in that the onlooker is observing a particular child or group of children. The child stands or sits within speaking distance of the group so that they can see and hear everything that takes place.	The child may talk to the children they are observing by asking questions or giving suggestions, but the child does not enter into the play.	As with unoccupied play, onlooker play may not seem important, but again you must respect a child's decision not to participate and see the value in a child's observation of others.

Competition

Competition can be both positive and negative.

When children participate in competitive or group activity, they learn about winning and losing, learn to work with others, to achieve goals, to celebrate the success of others and support those who are disappointed in their performance. These are all important social development abilities.

Unfortunately, competitive games also reduce children's opportunity to practise skills. In competitive games, the children with the greatest skill get lots of practice, while the children with less developed skills are eliminated early. This reduces practice time and provides little chance for developing skills. The children who go out early in a competitive game might become bored, upset or angry. Their emotions may not be about winning or losing, in fact it may be that they would like more time to practice, they are disappointed in their level of skill or they may have hoped to contribute toward team play.

Non-competitive games ensure all children participate most of the time so that a group of children can develop their skills. In early childhood, where social abilities are just developing, non-competitive games and activities are of much greater value.

✎ Practice Task 6

1. Draw a line to match each term about social development to its definition.

*   Temperament and personality

*   Social milestones

*   Competitive play

*   Non-competitive games ensure all children participate most of the time so that the group of children can develop their skills.

*   The behavioural characteristics children are born with, that form the way that they react to certain situations.

*   The markers in behaviour that change as children grow and develop.

2. Draw a line to match each of Mildred Parten's types of play with the example of children engaged in play.

* Onlooker play

* A child is sitting at the doll's house playing alone. She is moving the dolls around and making them talk to each other.

* Unoccupied play

* Two children are playing in the sandpit, but are not speaking to each other. One is playing with a truck and driving it up a plank, while the other child is digging a big hole.

* Play with rules

* Two children are playing in the home corner. One child is making food in the kitchen while the other is putting the dolls to bed. They speak to each other about what they are doing, but do not engage in each other's play.

* Cooperative play

* Three children are playing in the block area. They are building a castle with the blocks and are discussing how they are going to build it and who is going to complete each role.

* Associative play

* A group of children are playing a game of cricket. There are set roles of a bowler, a batter, a wicket keeper and fielder. The children organise to rotate through the different positions.

* Parallel play

* A child is sitting in the book corner on the couch. She is looking around the room and taking her shoes off. Occasionally she turns a page in her book.

* Solitary play

* A group of children is playing a board game. Another child comes to the table and reminds the children whose turn it is next. He does not want to join in and play the game himself.

3B Social development outcomes

There are many experiences that can help children develop social skills.

You can influence the play and social development of children through:

> formally organised activities
> times and places for unplanned interaction
> meetings
> travel
> walks
> setting up the environment or venue.

The following table outlines how the approved learning framework, the EYLF, helps you understand the importance of social development and how you can work toward supporting children's learning and development.

Set up activities and experiences to encourage social development.

EYLF Outcome	Areas of focus
> Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity	> Care, empathy and respect > One-to-one and group interactions > Building relationships > Sharing ideas and working on these with others > Participating in play with others > Becoming aware of others and their needs > Cooperating and negotiating > Sharing achievements > Exploring points of view > Sharing and learning about culture and difference > Learning about community > Supporting others
> Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world	> Belonging and connectedness > Inclusive practice > Communication skills > Exploring other ways of being > Participating in reciprocal relationships > Contributing to play > Decision making and solving problems with others > Showing concern for others > Listening to others > Connecting with others > Development of compassion and kindness > Learning about fair and unfair behaviours

EYLF Outcome	Areas of focus
➤ Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	➤ Supporting others ➤ Celebrating the achievements of others ➤ Cooperating with others ➤ Watching and observing others ➤ Taking responsibility for actions ➤ Awareness of others needs ➤ Contributing to shared projects and experiences ➤ Connecting with others ➤ Negotiating needs
➤ Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners	➤ Noticing and learning from the dispositions of others ➤ Mirroring and repeating actions of others ➤ Connecting with others to engage in learning
➤ Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators	➤ Interacting verbally and non-verbally ➤ Sharing meaning with others ➤ Contributing ideas and experiences to play ➤ Listening ➤ Exchanging ideas, feelings and understandings ➤ Considering the perspectives of others ➤ Sharing ideas, roles and scripts ➤ Experimenting with ways of expressing themselves and understanding how others express themselves ➤ Connecting what they learn about themselves to understanding of others

You can research information about the approved learning frameworks at: aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks

Care, empathy and respect

The trust created between an educator, a child and their family contributes to healthy social development.

Children, particularly infants, rely on educators and other adults to have their needs met. They use cues to express their needs, and rely on educators to understand and respond to these cues. If the child's needs are not met, or their cues are not acknowledged, they will not trust those around them. Believing that they lack the ability to make things happen will reduce their self-esteem and their feeling of safety.

If a child has learnt that they can trust the world and they have a strong sense of independence, they will also have ideas, energy and enthusiasm to explore the world. A child without trust may be wary and hostile. They will try to protect themselves from an unpredictable world and either isolate themselves from others or use behaviours that are unacceptable or keep others from developing a close relationship with them.

Respect can be shown by using an approach that assists you to gain the child's trust. Whether you need to wipe a nose, change a nappy, move play to another area or ask a question, always approach the child, move to their eye level (for example, by crouching down) and tell them what you are going to do and what you want them to do.

The interactions you have with the child, to ensure their relationship with you is secure and trusting, are essential if you are to provide support during play. To develop a secure and trusting relationship that will benefit children during play, you must:

- get to know the individual child
- provide an environment that responds to the interests, strengths, needs and culture of the child and their family
- frequently interact with the child
- promptly respond to the child's needs
- model appropriate behaviours
- use positive communication
- provide encouragement
- offer choices
- redirect inappropriate behaviour
- apply limits and guidelines.

Example
Demonstrating respectful interactions

Kristen welcomes each child into the room by moving to their level and saying hello. She always makes a comment that is special to each child. For example, she:

- asks Carol about how her new toy car is going
- lets Sabrina know that today she can engage in painting and making collages
- welcomes Tammy with a big hug and tells her that she has really strong arms
- thanks Ashan for reminding her to water the pot plants as they were really thirsty.

Prosocial behaviour

Prosocial behaviour relates to the successful and appropriate manner in which people interact.

It relates to voluntary behaviour that benefits another person by:

- helping, comforting or rescuing
- showing empathy and kindness
- giving and sharing
- showing positive verbal and physical contact
- showing concern
- understanding another person's perspective
- cooperating with others.

Modelling is an excellent way to display prosocial behaviour. When you model this behaviour, it provides children with an example of how they can empathise with, care for and respect others. You can model care, empathy and respect by:

➤ showing you care about others, including other staff members, children and families by asking how they are, making decisions with them, speaking to them respectfully and being positive about their contributions

➤ supporting others when they are upset, grumpy or frightened

➤ talking about how people feel

➤ redirecting negative comments.

Example
Modelling care, empathy and respect

Constance, the educator, is in the sandpit with Jervis (five years) and Lysa (three years). They build near each other in parallel play for some time, when Jervis suddenly pushes Lysa over, grabs the shovel she was using, and yells, 'Lysa, you are a baby!'

Constance immediately goes to Lysa and helps her to her feet, checking if she is okay. Constance then moves to Jervis and says that she was concerned to see him be so rough with another person.

Constance asks Jervis to return the shovel to Lysa. She asks him how he would feel if someone took his shovel away. Jervis says he would feel sad.

Constance says that she would feel this way too. She offers Jervis another shovel and supports the children to recommence their play.

One-on-one interactions

Often one-on-one interactions occur spontaneously. These are times when you can work with a child on an activity, such as reading a story or completing a puzzle.

Routine times also provide opportunities for one-on-one interaction. This might occur during:

➤ welcome and farewell time

➤ toileting or nappy-change time

➤ mealtimes

➤ rest, sleep and relaxation.

During these routines you can:

➤ greet and farewell every child in an individual way

➤ respond to their cues or requests

➤ return the interactions they initiate with you

➤ talk about the child's day, weekend, plans for the next day, etc.

➤ use the child's name

➤ talk about what you are doing.

When you take time to complete routines and make the most of the one-to-one interactions you are having with a child, you will provide a relaxed social time and lots of contact appropriate to the child's preferences. For example, you can do this by:

> cuddling them
> sitting them on your knee
> rubbing their back
> holding hands
> singing
> reciting poems.

Element 5.1.1 of the NQS states that 'Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included'. This includes the way you engage, participate in play and develop secure relationships with children.

Belonging and connectedness

Children feel belonging when their environment includes aspects of their home life and reflects their interests.

They feel connected when they are involved in the decisions and changes that take place around them, and when the people they interact with are respectful and take time to communicate with them.

Children's sense of belonging and connectedness is important for their social wellbeing.

To help children feel that they belong, provide:

> familiar staff
> warm and trusting relationships
> places for children to put their belongings
> photo displays of children and family members, including pets
> experiences that reflect children's interests
> room changes that are made in consultation with the children.

To help children feel they are connected, provide:

> support for developing friendships
> a connection to the natural world
> resources that reflect the child's family life
> discussion of the child's interests and home life
> opportunities to use home languages.

Diversity and inclusive practices

Diversity relates to a variety of characteristics that may be viewed as differences.

These differences may relate to:

> gender
> race and language background

- culture
- age
- interests and preferences
- social activity and lifestyle
- communication style
- personality or temperament
- length of time and regularity of attending the service
- ability.

From as early as two years old, children begin to notice physical differences in people, particularly relating to gender, skin colour and obvious physical differences. This is part of the child's self-discovery as they ask, 'Who am I?'

Children begin to determine who they are from their experiences with others. For example, they identify whether they are male or female, become aware of the colour of their skin, eyes and hair, and find out about their bodies and their physical capabilities.

As children start forming relationships with others, they develop attitudes about differences. Early ideas about particular groups of people can influence children's feelings about who they are, as well as how they feel about others.

Play can help children to accept and value all people, particularly those who may appear different from themselves. The following table provides some examples of inclusive practices and how you can support this learning.

Diversity	Create an environment that reflects many different kinds of people and ways of living; for example, you can: • add various cultural items to a dramatic play area • include music or pictures of people from various cultures • invite visitors to participate as volunteers or guests
Equity and inclusiveness	Arrange a play setting that promotes participation of both boys and girls, disabled and able-bodied children, and children of various cultural backgrounds.
Family involvement	Involve family members in children's play by providing education and information that extends family understanding of play and children's acceptance of others, and/or discussing issues privately with particular family members.
Challenge negative behaviours	Challenge any behaviour that alerts you to negative attitudes that may be developing in children; for example, by talking about feelings if children are singling others out.

Encouraging children to accept cultural differences

Children need to see diversity in their daily lives to be able to value and accept it.

You can encourage play between children with cultural differences, including different racial backgrounds, by doing the following:

> Make cultural diversity part of the day-to-day environment rather than just bringing out cultural resources on special days or occasions.
> Allow children to use play that depicts their culture through role-playing, modelling or their native language.
> Be aware of community culture and incorporate:
> celebrations and items of importance, such as birthdays, Chinese New Year, Ramadan and Holi
> resources such as, Chinese lanterns, saris for dress-ups, dolls with varied skin colours and Aboriginal clapping sticks.
> Realistically depict life outside the service so that everyone feels accepted.
> Respect all cultures – this means the differences between one family and another.
> Educate yourself about the children's lives outside of the service.
> Do not allow yourself to stereotype any child or family.
> Celebrate special occasions that are important to each of the children at the service.

Encouraging children to accept gender differences

Encourage children to accept and respect gender differences.

Actions to encourage children to accept gender differences include the following:

> Avoid labelling children's activities as 'for boys' or 'for girls'; instead use terms like 'all children'.
> When grouping children, you can use gender characteristics but equalise this by using other characteristics such as hair colour, colour of clothes or age. This gives children a broad understanding of difference.

Encourage boys and girls to participate in a variety of experiences together

> Be aware that boys and girls play differently.
> Encourage everyone to participate in all areas of play; for example, encourage boys to dress up, girls to engage in messy play, and initiate more spontaneous interactions with all children in the group.
> Be sensitive to the attitudes of families – some cultures have strict ideas on suitable behaviour for boys and girls, and you may need to make compromises.

Additional support needs

Most children need additional support at some time. This may be related to an emerging skill, a topic they cannot grasp, or an ongoing challenge.

To encourage children with additional support needs to play and be social include the following:

> Involving them in all types of play for all areas of development.
> Participate in the play to model ways to include the child and encourage interactions.

- Provide specific equipment or setup to ensure success.
- Follow individual programs that have been developed for the child by a specialist service.
- Ensure that the child's individual programs are incorporated into the overall curriculum and play-setting to provide an inclusive experience for the child.
- Encourage other children to participate in the activities specified by specialist services or set up for those needing additional support.

When you encourage all children, you are modelling communication and interactions that children will learn from, which assists them to use appropriate communication with others.

Example
Encouraging participation

Bridget, an educator, is in the home corner with a group of five-year-old children. She is part of their play as they make breakfast using toy foods and do the dishes.

Bridget says, 'I need to drive my truck today so I can build the new road.' She points to the poster of the earth movers and says, 'That's my truck, the big one at the top.' She then asks each child where they will be working today as she dries the dishes.

The children respond as they help Bridget dry the dishes. Bridget says, 'Thank you, everyone!' They all say goodbye and head off to 'work'.

Communication skills

Children's social play is influenced by their interaction and communication skills.

This includes communication skills to express themselves and to listen to others. For communication to be effective, both processes need to occur.

When supporting a child's communication, encourage the child to verbally express themselves as much as possible. Children use non-verbal cues for communication until they are developmentally ready to speak. Until this time, you should model the use of words in a correct and clear way.

Children will wish to solve problems, such as how to complete a task, or negotiate to work out who will go first or what role to take, and you can support them by providing appropriate words to use; for example, you might help them to ask for a toy, or to join in a play situation. Not all children have the ability to use words skilfully; you are there to model positive examples of words that can be used in a variety of situations.

To communicate clearly and develop skilled interactions, children need to be able to:

- express their ideas
- negotiate roles
- collaborate to achieve goals.

Some ways you can model and support the development of these skills includes:

- listening to children
- sharing the ideas you have and the ideas of others
- asking questions
- helping children through their own problem-solving process
- giving children the appropriate words to use
- asking children if they need help and encouraging them to ask for help
- encouraging others to help
- assisting children to set goals so they can work together with focus.

Negotiating

Educators begin to model and support negotiation by providing comments and showing the appropriate actions.

As a child becomes more capable in using language and in understanding their wants as well as that of other children, educators give more responsibility to the child.

Initially you might comment and follow through with an action; for example:

- 'I can see you want the rattle toy. Let's play with the car while you wait.'
- 'I will give you the rattle toy if you give the car to me.'

Later you can support the child to negotiate for themselves.

The process of building negotiating skills might look like the following.

Action	Example
The educator models the words and actions	'What if Jean has a turn now, and then you have a turn?'
The educator models the words and supports the child to put these into action.	'Tell Jean that you would like a turn.'
The educator supports the child to put the action into place independently.	'What could you say to Jean?'

Example
Modelling communication skills

An educator is supporting two children who have decided to build using the wooden blocks. These are the ways she models communication skills:

> 'Kip, Eugenie is not sure what to do. You should explain how she can work with you.' (Negotiating roles)

> 'Explain to Eugenie what your plan is.' (Expressing ideas)

> 'Eugenie has some ideas for the building, Kip. Maybe she could tell you and you can both work together?' (Collaborating to achieve a goal)

> 'Eugenie, Kip would like to explain his idea. If you stop to listen, you will understand what he means.' (Understanding each other)

> 'Kip, Eugenie has an idea too. Maybe we can listen and see if it works with the plan.' (Expressing ideas)

Communication difficulties

Most children spend at least some time in solitary or quiet play; they enjoy working alone and achieving their own goals.

However, some children have difficulty working with others or becoming involved in small or large groups. These children may be shy or inexperienced, or they may have a particular communication difficulty.

Children with communication difficulties may misinterpret social cues and lack knowledge of how to behave in social situations. They may:

> laugh at inappropriate times
> ignore others' attempts to interact with them
> push others away if they attempt to join in
> become physically aggressive
> watch others in play
> become withdrawn and find hiding places while others play.

A child who has difficulty interacting with others will need time to familiarise themselves with the situation they plan to enter. They may also need to prepare themselves to become part of the experience.

A child who has difficulty forming relationships with play partners will benefit from your help to improve their social skills.

By using your own interactions and the planned experiences you provide, you can support the child to learn to:

> compromise
> share
> make decisions
> solve problems

> understand how their emotions affect others
> win and lose
> use prosocial behaviours
> accept similarities and differences.

Here are some examples of games and activities that help children to manage social relationships and develop their social skills.

Type of game	Examples
Name games	➤ 'Hello' and 'name' songs, chants and rhymes. For example: – 'Who stole the cookie?' – 'How do you do?' ➤ Photos of children's faces made into puzzles ➤ Photo albums of children in the group
Facial expression and emotion games	➤ Emotion flash cards for matching ➤ Copy the emotion ➤ Pretend to … (be happy, sad, etc.)
Laughter games	➤ Make the statue laugh ➤ Who has the funniest laugh?
Cooperation games and projects	➤ Large-scale construction ➤ Murals ➤ Ball games ➤ Garden project
Negotiation games	➤ Cooking a pizza in pairs – deciding on the toppings liked by both ➤ Small groups setting the table for lunch – working out who will do what task ➤ Planning an activity together

Watching and observing others

There are a number of reasons why a child may choose to observe others.

They might be:

➤ learning new information from direction or modelling
➤ considering new ideas
➤ participating in onlooker play or unoccupied play
➤ taking time out to refuel, rest or change their play.

It is unrealistic to expect a child to participate constantly, especially if they are in long day care. Children occasionally need time to withdraw from social contact, just as adults do. However, you might find that the child needs your support because they:

➤ feel unable to enter a play situation
➤ lack the skills to participate
➤ believe they are not welcome in the situation.

Your observations of the child and some gentle questioning will help you find out if they need support. You might ask:

➤ 'Would you like to play too?'

> 'Can I help you to ...?'
> 'Can [the child] play too?'
> 'What would you like to do?'

The challenge for you as an educator is to identify whether the child is watching and observing for a positive reason or because of a lack of skill or ability.

Example
Respecting the child's choice

Glenise and Ashton are standing a short distance away from the science bench watching other children looking at the caterpillars. The educator observes Glenise and Ashton, then asks, 'Would you like to come and see the caterpillars with me?' Ashton shakes her head, but Glenise agrees. As they approach the bench, the educator says to the other children, 'Glenise would like to look at the caterpillars too. Let's make a space for her.'

Taking responsibility for actions

To support children to strengthen their social skills, help them to learn to take responsibility for their actions – particularly in regard to how they interact with others and the environment.

This is especially important when working with toddlers and preschoolers as they are attempting to assert themselves, and often test situations and people. You can help a toddler or preschooler to understand the effects of their actions by:

> discussing what is occurring in terms the child understands
> encouraging children to help rectify a situation
> being consistent.

These strategies are outlined in the following table.

Discussion	Discuss what is occurring in a simple but pleasant way; for example, say to the child:
	> 'You threw the ball and it went under the bench. How will you play with it now?'
	> 'If you throw your biscuit, it will go on the floor. You won't be able to eat the biscuit then.'
Rectifying	Encourage the child to help rectify a situation they have caused; this might include hugging a child they have hurt (with the other child's permission) or cleaning up a spill.
Consistency	Be consistent and follow through with limits and guidelines. This is important as the child will quickly learn that testing you is not necessary and that you will continue to have the same expectations and support for them.

The outcome of any discussion should be that the child understands what has happened and what the result is – these are the consequences. To support children to understand consequences, you can explain to them what happened, what the consequences are, why this occurred and how they can avoid this in the future.

✎ Practice Task 7

1. Draw a line to match each EYLF learning outcome to the area of social development.

   * Learning Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

   * Taking responsibility for actions

   * Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world

   * Care, empathy and respect

   * Learning Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

   * Inclusive practice

2. Draw a line to match each social development outcome with the environment that encourages it.

   * Inclusive practice

   * Story area with a bookshelf and an arm chair

   * Recognising gender differences

   * Home corner with a variety of different foods, including pasta, sushi rolls, rice, tacos, pizza and noodles

   * Respecting cultural differences

   * A large tree decorated on the wall with photos of children with their families

   * One-on-one interactions

   * A table with a mirror and different face parts on icy pole sticks, including different coloured eyes, skin colour and hair colour

   * Belonging and connectedness

   * Dress-up area with many types of uniforms and occupation costumes, and posters on the wall showing a female builder and a male nurse

3. Abigail and Stefano, both aged four years, are playing together. The educator, Patsy, is supporting their social development. Draw a line to match each development outcome to the example.

* Expressing ideas and taking responsibility for actions	* Patsy approaches Abigail saying, 'Good morning, Abigail. How was your Grandma's birthday party on the weekend? I am looking forward to hearing all about it.'
* Building communication skills	* Abigail is building a tower of blocks. Stefano is playing with a ball. Stefano throws the ball toward Abigail's building and it falls. Patsy bends down to Stefano and says, 'I think that Abigail is sad. Her tower has fallen down. How might you fix what has happened?' Stefano suggests that he might help Abigail build her tower again.
* Care, empathy and respect	* In the home area Abigail and Stefano are playing with dolls. Stefano begins to feed the doll with a bottle. Abigail takes the bottle off Stefano and feeds his doll. Patsy says to Abigail, 'Stefano was using the bottle, if you would like a turn you need to ask Stefano if he is finished.'
* Negotiating roles and collaborating to achieve goals	* Children are painting with water, buckets and brushes outside. Stefano approaches Patsy and asks what the children are doing. Patsy suggests that Stefano watch what the children are doing and see if he would like to paint with water also.
* Watching and observing	* Stefano and Abigail ask Patsy if they can make a bus. Patsy suggests they work out what they need. The children talk together and share their needs with Patsy. Once the bus is built, Patsy helps the children decide who will drive the bus first.

Summary

> Children need support to take responsibility for their own actions.
> There are many instances when you can spend one-on-one time with children.
> When you model care, empathy and respect for others, the children will learn from your example.
> The language used to express ideas, negotiate roles and collaborate to achieve goals can be modelled.
> Trusting relationships can be developed with children; this can extend to educators, other adults and other children.
> Individual differences can be exciting and interesting when approached with respect.
> Children may wish to simply observe at times.

Learning Checkpoint 3
Supporting social development

1. Draw a line to match each social development concept to the most suitable image.

* Opportunities for one-to-one interaction

* Opportunities for large and small group experiences

* Play stages theory – cooperative play

* Play stages theory – parallel play

* Encouraging children to respect differences

* Modelling care, empathy and respect

2. Which of the following statements about social development are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

a. When you know the play stage of each child, you can set up social experiences that benefit their development.

* Yes　　* No

b. Children need to take responsibility for their actions. This relates to EYLF Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.

* Yes　　* No

c. If a child doesn't communicate clearly, they should apologise. This means they are taking responsibility for their actions.

* Yes　　* No

d. If a child spills something, they should take responsibility for their actions by helping to clean up the spill.

* Yes　　* No

e. Educators should model the way they instruct others and tell them what to do. This will provide children with information about how to negotiate roles and collaborate with others.

* Yes　　* No

f. One way to help children when they are having trouble understanding each other is to provide games during the day that include problem-solving and talking to each other.

* Yes　　* No

Supporting emotional development

As they develop, children form a primary attachment to a significant person, but they are capable of forming attachments to many different people.

Strong attachments are built through prompt and consistent attention to a child's needs, and by recognising and supporting them through their feelings. Children often make sense of unknown feelings and experiences by linking them to familiar objects and people.

4A Emotional development theory

When you understand the basic principles of emotional development, you will be able to support children to express and manage their feelings appropriately.

This also provides a basis for understanding how to support and encourage children's efforts.

As you observe children at play you will get a sense of how play affects a child's self-esteem, independence and sense of achievement. You will also see how play enables children to better understand themselves through expressing their fears, joys and frustrations.

Emotional development theory will help you understand the emotional needs and expressions of children.

Humanistic theory

According to the humanistic theory, basic needs must be met before satisfying more complex needs.

Psychology theorist Abraham Maslow (1908–1970) identified the needs of children and adults and organised these into basic needs that must be met before progressing to more complex needs.

You may recognise Maslow's theory, presented as a pyramid below.

Being
all you
can be

Self-esteem and
the need for respect,
attention and
appreciation

Love and
belonging

Safety, security, limits and
consistency

Food, rest and sleep, and basic body
functions

The hierarchy of needs demonstrates that emotional needs link with most needs of humans. You can see that the basic needs are food, rest and sleep, and basic body functions (toileting, swallowing, etc.).

Once basic physical needs are met, emotional needs are tied in with all other levels, forming a foundation for success.

Safety, security, limits and consistency allow people to feel like their emotional needs are being met and acknowledged. Love and belonging support feelings of being needed, whereas self-esteem and the need for respect, attention and appreciation are directly linked to how people experience and react to feelings and change, and how they think others will feel and react.

Maslow's theory demonstrates how an emotionally cared for and confident child can attempt to be all they can be.

Maslow's theory can also help you to recognise priorities in caring for and educating children by demonstrating that your expectations must match the child's immediate needs. For example, if a child feels insecure and unsafe (second-level needs), they won't feel loved and cared for (third-level needs). They may not participate fully in the experiences you plan and may not develop secure relationships with others. In addition, the child's developmental progress may be affected as they are focused on being safe and secure, rather than being involved and challenged.

Throughout this resource, you will notice many points that relate to the priorities you give to children's needs (particularly in caring for their social and emotional development) as a foundation for ensuring other developmental areas are catered for appropriately.

Attachment theory

John Bowlby (1907–1990) identified that children are able to form attachments to a number of people.

There is usually a primary caregiver with whom the attachment is strongest, and any number of other attachments may follow. The primary caregiver is the person who provides for the child's physical and emotional needs consistently and responsively. This person is most likely to be a family member or guardian.

Other attachments are important to the child's social and emotional development, and you should aim to develop an attachment relationship with all children. Children who are securely attached will experience less distress than others.

Babies usually form the strongest bond with their primary caregiver.

Children show attachment relationships through the following behaviours.

Behaviour	Characteristics
Social referencing	The child may watch emotional responses and respond in a similar way to a caregiver they are attached to.
	For example, if a spider is crawling on the wall, the child may copy the response of the caregiver. If the caregiver screams, the child will scream; if the caregiver says, 'Hey, look how many legs it has!' the child will show interest.
Anchoring	The child may move off to explore, but will not move too far from the caregiver they are attached to.
	The child will ensure this caregiver is close by – just in case – and will be confused and concerned if the caregiver moves away unexpectedly.
Refuelling	The child may periodically return to the caregiver they are attached to with a toy or activity, or just to make sure they are still there.
	The child will also return to the caregiver when frightened, hurt or upset.

These attachment behaviours allow you to observe how well you have developed relationships with children. Understanding attachment behaviours also guides you to understand what is required of you when a child is attached to you. If you are available to a child and respond to their emotional needs, you will develop a healthy, trusting bond.

Emotional needs

By responding to all feelings, you start to build relationships with children and show them that you care.

Developmental stage	Basic emotional needs
Infants	Infants need to: ➤ be responded to ➤ have their non-verbal communication understood and attended to.
Toddlers	Toddlers need to: ➤ express themselves through activities and experiences ➤ express themselves verbally ➤ name their feelings.
Preschoolers	Preschoolers need to: ➤ express themselves through physical activities, such as clapping and stamping ➤ express their feelings verbally ➤ express their feelings through paintings, drawings and other creative experiences.

✎ Practice Task 8

Draw a line to match each emotional development theory to the correct description.

* Maslow's humanistic theory

* Bowlby's attachment theory

* Consistent emotional support

* Children's emotional development

* Relies on other aspects of development, such as physical, social, cognitive and communication skills. An educator must interact and support all of these areas.

* Basic needs must be met before satisfying more complex needs. Belonging and connectedness are included in these needs.

* Children are able to form relationships with a number of people. When they experience strong relationships, they will be able to develop other trusting relationships later in their development.

* To build strong and trusting relationships where children can express and manage their feelings, they need to know that they are cared for, safe and secure.

4B Emotional development outcomes

The EYLF helps you understand the importance of emotional development and how you can work towards supporting children's learning and development.

The following table outlines key areas of emotional development and how these link with EYLF outcomes and sub-outcome.

EYLF Outcome	Areas of focus
➤ Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity	➤ Building secure attachment ➤ Feeling belonging ➤ Expressing physiological responses ➤ Expressing feelings ➤ Showing anxiety and fear ➤ Making choices and decisions ➤ experiencing self-esteem, pride and confidence ➤ Encouraging efforts ➤ Feeling empathy
➤ Outcome 2: Children connect with and contribute to their world	➤ Sense of belonging ➤ Understanding emotions ➤ Feeling included or excluded
➤ Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing:	➤ Demonstrating trust and confidence ➤ Experiencing distress, confusion, frustration, humour, happiness and satisfaction ➤ Enjoying solitude ➤ Self-regulating ➤ Feeling confident enough to take risks, accept challenges, make choices ➤ Managing change ➤ Assert independence ➤ Acknowledging contribution ➤ Connecting with others
➤ Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners	➤ Expressing wonder and interest ➤ Being able to be curious and enthusiastic ➤ Persevering and persisting ➤ Exploring the environment independently
➤ Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators	➤ Sharing feelings ➤ Exchanging thoughts and ideas

You can research information about the approved learning frameworks at: aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks

Physiological responses

Physiological responses are what happens to someone's body when they experience emotions.

Emotions are the feelings that we experience as part of our mental state. They may be positive or negative, and include the following.

Positive emotions	Negative emotions
➤ Enthusiasm	➤ Grief
➤ Happiness	➤ Anger
➤ Empathy	➤ Shame
➤ Excitement	➤ Sadness
➤ Curiosity	➤ Fear

Positive emotions are pleasant to experience, and negative emotions are often upsetting. However, both are important in children's emotional development. Children need to learn to express and manage their emotions appropriately in order to participate and feel a sense of belonging.

Negative feelings experienced by children are commonly caused by:

➤ accidents

➤ other children

➤ losing a toy or having a toy taken from them

➤ embarrassment

➤ the environment being too noisy, crowded, large, busy, quiet or uninteresting

➤ not being heard

➤ unexpected changes.

Physiological responses may be more noticeable when a child is anxious, frightened, frustrated, angry or in pain. Examples include:

➤ crying

➤ hiding

➤ hitting out at others

➤ shaking

➤ wetting their pants

➤ a rapid heartbeat

➤ rapid breathing

➤ shortness of breath

➤ blushing

➤ sweating

➤ inability to speak

➤ feeling tense

➤ damaging equipment or materials

➤ being jumpy (overly aware and worried about the surroundings and what is happening).

Crying is a physiological response to negative emotions.

When children have these reactions they can be quite frightening. They may need additional support and some explanation of what is happening to them.

Expressing feelings

There are a number of strategies you can use to encourage children to express and manage their feelings appropriately, and to support their efforts.

When feelings are being expressed as clear responses to an emotion, they can be responded to in simple ways. When children express feelings and ideas, both positive and negative, you can respond using the following strategies.

Strategy	Examples
Listen to what the child has to say.	➤ Use active listening. ➤ Use positive body language. ➤ Face the child. ➤ Get down to their level.
Avoid leading the child with specific questions; instead, respond with simple comments.	➤ 'Oh, I understand.' ➤ 'That's interesting.' ➤ 'What an interesting idea.' ➤ 'How does it feel?'
Recognise specific feelings where possible to enable the child to do the same.	➤ 'You seem angry.' ➤ 'Are you sad about it?' ➤ 'You are very excited about this idea, aren't you?' ➤ 'You seem very confident!' ➤ 'I'm glad that you're happy.'
Ask the child what to do next.	➤ Find out what the child wants to do. ➤ Brainstorm a solution together if the child is old enough.
Use physical language.	➤ Sit close to the child. ➤ Touch the child gently on the arm or rub their back. ➤ Be sure not to invade the child's space. ➤ Use appropriate actions for an educator to a child. ➤ Demonstrate enjoyment or pleasure if appropriate by clapping, smiling or laughing. ➤ Mirror the child's feelings if appropriate.
Provide materials or opportunities.	➤ The child may need a comforter (toy, blanket, dummy, etc.). ➤ The child may need time, space, materials or people so their idea can be expressed. ➤ The child may need to tell others or express themselves to specific people. ➤ The child may need space for privacy, solitude or quiet, where they can relax or rest and refuel.

Strategy	Examples
Redirect to the next activity.	› If the child is extremely upset, redirection is not useful or appropriate as their feelings would be stifled. Allow some quiet time until they are ready to move on. › Suggest an activity that the child usually enjoys. › Monitor any redirection and participate with the child if possible until they are settled. › Provide for their success. › If the child is extremely excited or enthusiastic, redirection should relate to furthering their ideas and feelings. › Monitor the child's participation to ensure they are continuing to feel positive and enthusiastic. › Monitor their levels of frustration, confidence and challenge.

Anxiety and fear

Children often experience fear and anxiety because they do not understand a situation or are not prepared for change.

Fear and anxiety are emotions recognised as a reflex at birth and develop in a child as their brain function increases, and their imagination and thought processes become more complex and abstract.

The following table summarises common fears that children may become anxious about. Children may become more fearful when they are managing other issues in their lives.

Age group	Common fears
Infants	Infants show an instinctive fear of sensory surprises, like loud noises, unexpected approaches and unknown people (stranger anxiety). Later, once their brains are better able to connect objects and actions with sounds, they show fear of being separated from familiar people (separation anxiety).
Toddlers	Toddlers may show fear of night time, darkness and of potentially scary activities. This occurs due to their developing imagination.
Preschoolers	Preschoolers show fear of imaginary things and often have nightmares. They become afraid of things they don't understand, sometimes after having overheard an adult conversation they misunderstood.

Stranger anxiety

Infants may start to become fearful of strangers between the ages of six and nine months, however, stranger anxiety may occur at any age. .

When strangers are present, children may react by expressing signs of anxiety and they may seek support from someone they know. Their reactions show that the child is able to tell the difference between people and seek out those closest to them.

Stranger anxiety is normal and should be expected, and there are plenty of ways to support children at this stage of development.

When a child is anxious about you	➤ Be consistent and reassuring. ➤ Encourage families to participate in the orientation process so that the child is comfortable with their surroundings and the educators, and builds up their familiarity through short, frequent visits. ➤ Offer physical comfort to a child who is distressed; if the child becomes more upset, give them some space and use gentle reassuring comments instead.
When a child is anxious about another person	➤ Prepare children for new adults by talking about them prior to arrival. ➤ Model actions that show the person is safe, such as speaking to them, asking them questions and introducing the child. ➤ Offer physical comfort to a child who is distressed, tell them you are looking after them and will keep them safe. ➤ If the child becomes extremely upset, give them some space and remove them from the person they are afraid of.

Separation anxiety

At some stage, all children will experience anxiety at being separated from their family.

The onset of anxiety may be out of character for a child and may indicate that there are other issues you should consider, or it may be due to the child's developmental stage.

Common signs of distress a child may display include:

➤ withdrawal
➤ aggression
➤ crying
➤ behaviour that is out of character (any action or emotion that is not usual for this child).

Strategies for supporting children who show separation anxiety
➤ Physically comfort the child with a hug or by rubbing their back, arm or shoulder.
➤ Talk and listen to the child.
➤ Provide a comforter to relax the child, such as a dummy, blanket or toy.

Strategies for supporting children who show separation anxiety
➤ Redirect or distract the child with an activity (be sure to acknowledge the child's feelings first).
➤ Ask families about their practices at home. What makes the child comfortable? Does the child have any comforting toys or favourite songs?
➤ Make the environment more homelike by providing familiar toys and other things from home.
➤ Learn about what interests the child and incorporate this into your activities and routines.
➤ Use appropriate language and tone of voice when speaking with the child; act as calmly as possible.

Managing fear and anxiety

As fear affects children differently, your strategies for managing fear will vary.

When the routine is stable and predictable you can eliminate certain fears, such as:

➤ What will happen next?
➤ Who will be looking after me and making me feel safe?
➤ When will things happen?

The following strategies may be useful if a child expresses the emotion of fear.

Remove the child or the cause	Remove the child or the feared object if possible.
Get the child's attention	Ask the child to look at you and, if necessary, hold the child's face gently and turn them towards you. If the child resists, speak softly and tell them they are safe. The child may need to be able to watch what is scaring them.
Offer the child a security item/ comforter	If the child has an item they use for comfort, this is the time to use it. If the child doesn't have a favourite item, provide something they can use as one.
Comfort the child	Talk calmly and quietly and use your body language to let the child know you care about what they are feeling.
Acknowledge the fear	Acknowledge the fear by saying, 'I know you are afraid.' Ensure the child knows they are safe with you and stay nearby until they have calmed down. Don't talk too much; continuing to speak about the fear or continuously reassuring the child may increase their anxiety. Respond simply, as discussion is not appropriate during a fear response.
Redirect if possible	Encourage the child to move to another area or experience to give them something else to occupy their thoughts. This step may not suit all children and the timing may be difficult to judge.

Some strategies to manage the predictable fears children experience are outlined in the following table.

Anticipate fears and act to prevent them	If you know that a child is afraid of something or someone, you may be able to prepare them for experiencing fear or, if possible, avoid it completely.
Remove objects causing fear	If the child is afraid of a particular toy or noise, removing it will be relatively simple. If the child is afraid of something that cannot be removed, such as an educator, people with glasses, men or the playroom, you will have to try another strategy, such as providing comfort or introducing an issue slowly.
Prepare children for unpleasant times and events	Children's lives may involve unpleasant experiences; for example, having a blood test, going to hospital or moving rooms. You can use the suggested experiences identified previously to encourage emotional expression, and to provide ways for children to find out more about what the experience involves. Be honest and give the child accurate information, as telling children that an experience will be different to what it actually will be may only make them more afraid once they undergo the experience.
Appropriate routines	Ensure routines are appropriate for the age and stage of the child, and provide a stable and predictable environment. When routines aren't flexible or if materials and messages in the environment don't match a child's needs, the child may become fearful or distressed, and the common causes of negative feelings may become a regular part of the day.

Empowering children

It is generally easier to empower and enable children to manage fear and anxiety themselves by talking to them about their fears in the lead-up to an unpleasant or worrying event.

Demonstrate how to manage fear by:

> humming – this distracts their minds from the fear
> taking deep breaths – this allows their bodies to slow down and relax
> squeezing a hand or item – this gives a focus of tension and allows some anxiety to be alleviated through this action.

Ensure you are familiar with these fear-management methods so you can provide the child with the comfort and support they need. Most importantly, you need to ensure the environment and your relationship with the child is one that allows the expression of feelings, as suppressed feelings can lead to greater issues.

Encourage children to manage fear or anxiety themselves.

Choices and decisions

One of the first steps towards learning about decision-making is being able to make simple choices.

Children need to be given many opportunities to practise this skill as it takes a lot of learning to master it. When a child becomes involved in a choice, they have a feeling of ownership and are more likely to follow through with it.

Children of all ages are able to make choices. Infants start by deciding if they are hungry, if they have eaten enough, if they are tired or if they want to play. Later, children decide what they want to play with, what they want to eat and what they want to wear. They are also able to make choices about their behaviour and how they express their emotions.

Children need to have activities and experiences provided for them so that there is a range of options to make choices from. These activities and experiences need to be related to the child's strengths, interests and abilities. You also need to offer privacy, solitude and quiet areas for when children wish to take time to themselves and relax. When environments, experiences, routines and timetables are set up in this way, children's challenging behaviour is reduced. The behaviours you face are learning experiences rather than disruptions.

To create this type of environment, focus on:

› allowing children to make appropriate choices
› providing spaces and programs that include lots of choices
› modelling respect
› demonstrating you are consistent and trusting.

A child who has a strong sense of being able to choose will more confidently make a choice and will have more knowledge of their choices to enable them to make an informed decision. This aligns with NQS Element 1.2.3: Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions, and influence events and their world. When you help children to share their feelings with others in an appropriate manner and support them to make informed choices, you are demonstrating these elements in practice.

You can help children to develop their decision-making and problem-solving skills by teaching them how to:

› break big decisions into manageable tasks
› identify which issues to tackle in which order
› apply a strategy to use when they are faced with decisions
› understand other people's points of view.

Always offer choices that are realistic and can be followed through. Remember that young children (especially toddlers) are unable to make big decisions or choose between many options. Ensure you use questions when there are choices, and statements when there are no choices.

To provide children with the appropriate choices:

› know the level of choice suited to the child
› respect the decision that the child has made
› follow through with their choice.

Example
Providing appropriate choices

When Kyall takes the children outside he asks, 'Do you want to put your hats on?' The children reply, 'No!'

When Finn takes the children outside he says, 'Everyone needs their hats, please. If you don't have your hat on, you will need to stay inside or under the verandah.' The children all go to get their hats.

Behaviour choices

When it comes to behaviour choices, children may be faced with complex problem-solving.

There are two aspects they will need to think about:

> the best way to express their feelings or needs at the time
> the options available in the environment.

These things relate to one another. The goal of the educator is to be realistic about their expectations of a child and to support children to learn to manage their feelings and express them in safe ways. This is called self-regulation and it takes lots of practice and support to achieve. It is reflected in Element 5.2.2 of the NQS: Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts. In turn, children who are able to self-regulate become more resilient. Resilience is about being able to recover when something goes wrong.

Some ways you can support children to self-regulate include:

> recognising problems
> clarifying goals
> planning strategies
> finding solutions
> asking open-ended questions
> supporting children to share their ideas with others
> answering questions
> talking about routines and choices
> encouraging children to consult with each other
> supporting families to provide learning environments at home.

Many children find they are able to face issues rationally if they are able to use a private or quiet space to refresh and refuel. When children can take this time to gather their composure, they are self-regulating. This might work when children are tired, need emotional support or misunderstand a situation. You can support them to use this strategy by making suggestions, accompanying the child or making sure they know these opportunities are an option.

Some private quiet areas include:

> a cushioned area alone
> sitting under a tree alone or with an educator
> in a cubby or tent
> under a blanket
> on a mattress
> in a space they choose
> with an educator.

The important part about self-regulation and private places is that the child is choosing to do this and using it to control their own behaviour. In opposition to this strategy, time out, in which the child is told to sit somewhere until the adult is ready, takes away the child's opportunity to self-regulate and often increases their anger.

Example
Resilience and self-regulation

In the following examples, one child shows that she is able to self-regulate and that she is resilient, whereas another child shows that he has difficulty self-regulating and that he is less resilient.

Example 1: Self-regulation

Hamish knocks over Elise's stack of bricks. Elise is upset and tells Hamish to go away. Elise crosses her arms and starts to cry. Anfisa, the educator, asks Elise if she needs help. Elise stops crying, wipes her tears and begins to re-build her stack.

Example 2: Lack of self-regulation

Elise jumps on a sand castle that Hamish is building. Hamish is upset and tells Elise to go away. He lays in the sand and cries. Anfisa asks if Hamish needs help, but he yells at her and pushes her away. Anfisa tells Hamish she would be sitting nearby if he needs her, and sits at the edge of the sandpit. Hamish cries for some time, then starts to throw sand at other children. Anfisa moves closer to Hamish and talks quietly to him, trying to calm his behaviour and discuss more appropriate ways he could say that he is angry or upset. When Elise walks by five minutes later, Hamish yells at her and tells her to keep away. When the children are called to wash their hands, Hamish comes indoors. He is still sobbing and tells the other educators what has happened.

Anger

Many issues concerning children's feelings and behaviour are a result of them not understanding their emotions or dealing with feelings in inappropriate ways. Anger is an example of this.

Children's outbursts can be frightening and even dangerous. This may demonstrate that the child is not in control of their feelings or is not capable of expressing themselves safely.

Your ability to deal with children's emotional outbursts relies on your ability to remain calm. Your actions should be consistent and you should be open to comforting upset children at the appropriate time, even though they may seem difficult to get close to.

Children deal with emotions differently. Some children need to:

> have quiet time away from others
> try to solve the problem
> talk to someone who is prepared to listen
> express their emotions physically.

You can cater for each of these calming methods in your environment, but you must also consider the safety of the other children. It is appropriate for children to become emotional, but it is inappropriate for them to hurt others, damage the environment or attempt to leave your care. The limits and strategies you provide for the child at this stage will help them throughout their life.

As you gain more experience working with children, it will become apparent that every child has different emotional needs and different levels of problem-solving skills. Emotional outbursts of anger are common for some children, just as emotional outbursts of fear, frustration, sadness and joy are common to others.

Example
Encouraging children to resolve problems

Katrina, four years old, has crossed arms and a scowl on her face and is stomping her feet and growling as she stands close to May, also four. Iris, the educator, comes over to the pair and kneels to their level. She asks what is wrong and Katrina says, 'Grrrrr!'

Iris explains to Katrina that she might be scaring May, but Katrina continues to scowl. Iris asks Katrina, 'Why are you upset?' Katrina says, 'Because of her!'

Iris asks May, 'Do you know what Katrina is upset about?' May shakes her head.

Iris explains to Katrina that she might need to talk to May and tell her what the problem is. She asks Katrina, 'Do you know what to say to May?' Katrina says she does.

Katrina tells May that the scarf she is wearing is from the home corner and she wants to play with it herself when she has finished doing a puzzle.

Iris explains to Katrina that May only knew this because Katrina told her, and she thanks Katrina for letting May know. Iris tells Katrina that when she uses a growling voice, May will be scared and won't know what she wants.

Iris supports Katrina to ask May about using the scarf: 'May, can I play with the scarf when you're finished?'

May replies, 'Yes, I'm nearly finished.'

Iris compliments the children for working out the problem by talking to each other.

Self-esteem, pride and confidence

Self-esteem encompasses the various impressions we have of ourselves.

The closer our self-concept (what we think we are) is to our ideal self (what we think we should be), the greater our self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to our personal judgment and feelings about who we are. In particular, it refers to how we feel about ourselves based on these judgments.

While self-esteem relates to our view of ourselves overall, our confidence is a little more changeable. Confidence relates to more specific things. For example, you may feel confident about caring for children's hygiene needs, but not feel confident in developing a curriculum.

Responding to achievements and sharing success

An emotional success happens when a child is pleased with something they have achieved, and feels a sense of pride.

This might be a task or experience they have participated in or completed, or it may be related to a relationship they have with another child or adult. Children feel an increased self-esteem from an achievement, but most will gain further positive feelings if they are acknowledged by another person.

To positively influence a child's self-esteem, you should:

- give individual attention to each child
- encourage children to attempt skills and activities
- give positive feedback
- provide opportunities for children to be independent
- support children to be considerate of others
- help children to be clear communicators
- acknowledge children when they help you or others
- provide children with positive messages about themselves
- encourage realistic ideals by providing materials, experiences and models that show diversity
- discourage put-downs by never using them yourself and telling others who use them that this is not appropriate behaviour
- avoid comparisons and competition
- accept mistakes as learning opportunities
- be genuine in your interactions with children
- allow children to make decisions, problem-solve and negotiate
- provide activities, equipment and expectations appropriate for a child's age and developmental stage
- identify and celebrate children's emotional successes.

It can be difficult to identify all successes when some children express their feelings openly, and others are quiet achievers. Careful observation and your knowledge of each child will enable you to recognise what they see as important and how they express themselves. Importantly, you must take the time to identify when children:

➤ achieve something and experience success

➤ are being challenged positively.

Your observations and interactions will help you identify and monitor the child's level of confidence as they are challenged positively or experience an achievement. The following table provides ideas that will help you identify what is happening when children are experiencing achievements and challenges, and suggests ways you can positively support and respond to them.

Child's experiences	What the child might say	Cues the child might give	What you can do
Achievements and successes	➤ 'Look what I've done.' ➤ 'We did it.' ➤ 'I did it myself!'	➤ Smiling ➤ Finishing and sharing their work ➤ Wanting to do the activity again ➤ Telling others	➤ Comment on the process or skill ➤ Ask how the activity was done ➤ Offer tasks for a similar skill level or area of interest
Positive challenges	➤ 'This is hard, but I can do it.' ➤ 'I know I can do it if I try hard.' ➤ 'Look what I can do.' ➤ 'I need some help, but not very much.'	➤ Smiling ➤ Humming or singing ➤ Concentrating hard ➤ Succeeding ➤ Working on the task for some time with progress ➤ Asking for a little help or feedback, but not wanting you to take over or complete the activity for them	➤ Stay nearby to ensure you provide timely support ➤ Offer ideas and help only when needed or asked for ➤ Comment on the process or skill ➤ Do not interrupt their concentration ➤ Allow time and space for success

Sharing successes with families

Family members are often excited to hear about the interests, learning and successes of their child, and to see how independent they are becoming.

Sharing information through informal discussion is a great way to develop a positive relationship with families, as is communicating about things that are happening with the whole group.

Some formal methods for information-sharing are providing:

➤ records that are personal to the family, such as a diary, app or portfolio

➤ records of routines and independence, such as a log, app or communication sheet

➤ opportunities for families to contribute information, such as a communication book, app or learning story

➤ times when families and educators get together, such as at a parent-educator meeting, on social media or digital meeting apps.

Encouraging efforts

Acknowledgment and encouragement shows children that you value them and their efforts – it increases their motivation, and develops their confidence and pride in themselves.

Acknowledgment and encouragement focuses on the child's efforts or the process of doing something. It is aimed at helping the children feel good about themselves, which helps to develop their self-esteem. For example, you could encourage a child after they have helped pack away toys by saying, 'Mindy, you worked really hard to put all the toys away'.

There is a range of ways you can demonstrate acknowledgment and encouragement during or after an event. You could use one or a number of the examples provided in the following table.

Provide feedback	Make a positive comment about: ➤ the effort that is being made ➤ the structure or colour of something the child has made ➤ the materials used ➤ the parts you are particularly interested in or attracted to.
Ask questions	Demonstrate your interest and appreciation by asking a relevant open question, such as: ➤ 'How did you do that?' ➤ 'What materials did you use?' ➤ 'Tell me what you think of your work?'
Thank children	➤ Acknowledge effort and thank children for their contribution by commenting and modelling basic manners.

Your knowledge of each individual child should enable you to recognise things that the child sees as important; you can also find out more about how the child expresses themselves.

To ensure you respond to successes, you must be prepared to consider things from the child's perspective. The most effective way to do this is by providing a child-focused program.

Example
Encouraging efforts

Daniel is drawing with crayons at a table. Christy, the educator, approaches and sits at the same table. Christy has noticed that Daniel has been working at the table for some time. As she sits down, she says, 'What have you been working so hard on, Daniel?'

Daniel is proud – he has drawn a horse. Christy can see that it is one of Daniel's most detailed drawings so far. She asks him if he is pleased and then comments that she really likes the way the horse's tail is flying out. Christy asks if Daniel would like to display the work on the art wall or if he plans to take it home tonight.

When Christy shows interest and comments positively on his drawing, Daniel's feelings of success are acknowledged and his self-esteem increases.

Empathy

When you have empathy, it means you understand what someone else is feeling or how you would feel if the same thing happened to you.

When you feel empathy for someone, you are caring for them and respecting their feelings.

Empathy develops gradually – you might notice that if one infant begins to cry, others will also start to cry. Toddlers begin to comfort others when they notice they are upset and, by preschool age, there will be an understanding of feelings and emotions related to things the child has experienced themselves.

However, until they are around six years old, children do not fully understand how others are affected by events.

The following table illustrates examples of ways you can support the development of empathy.

Skill	Example of encouraging empathy
Formulating social goals	'Keenan, how will you ask Miniya if you can play?'
Noticing social cues	'Look, Keenan, what is Miniya telling us by moving her head?'
Interpreting social cues	'Keenan, Miniya is nodding her head up and down. She must mean yes!'
Generating possible problem-solving strategies	'Miniya, explain how you would like Keenan to help you. What ideas do you have?'
Evaluating probable effectiveness of strategies	'Yes, Miniya, Keenan could watch or he could build a road. What do you think will help you most?'
Taking peer perspectives	'Miniya, how do you think Keenan would feel if he can only watch? Do you think he will feel helpful?'
Understanding social rules	'Miniya, Keenan has made a road just like you planned. Thanks for helping, Keenan!'
Remembering experiences and linking these to expectations for future reference	'Keenan, do you remember how you asked Miniya if you could help her yesterday? You could do that again today.'

Persevering with challenge

As well as supporting and acknowledging successes, it's also important to take the time to identify and monitor when children are frustrated, overly challenged or make mistakes.

Children often become frustrated if the challenges provided are inappropriate or too difficult. They may also become frustrated if your expectations are too high or too low.

The following table illustrates what you might hear and observe when a child is frustrated or overly challenged. It provides some ideas of how you can respond and support children's efforts. Most of these strategies support the child to learn to persevere when faced with a challenge. Over time this builds their resilience or ability to deal with difficult situations

What the child might say	Cues the child might give	How to encourage children to persevere
➤ 'I can't do this.' ➤ 'This is too hard.' ➤ 'I don't want to do this.' ➤ 'This is stupid.' ➤ 'I'm stupid.' ➤ 'You need to do it for me.' ➤ 'I'm no good at it.' ➤ 'Why can't I do it?'	➤ Frowning ➤ Growling or making aggressive sounds ➤ Stopping work ➤ Working on the task, but not progressing ➤ Asking you to do the task for them ➤ Telling you they can't do it ➤ Being aggressive, throwing materials, sweeping the activity off the table or interrupting others	➤ Stay with the child and offer help or assistance ➤ Simplify the activity if possible ➤ Provide strategies or techniques ➤ Give hints ➤ Change the activity to something more suitable ➤ Ensure that the next activity meets the child's level of ability ➤ Provide successful experiences to rebuild confidence

When children are supported to manage frustration and to persevere in working toward their goals, they will develop resilience.

Using mistakes to learn

Mistakes should be seen as a natural part of learning.

Relationship and behaviour mistakes are particularly common because social and emotional development relies on the child's ability to understand the needs of others, determine correct and incorrect responses, and control their feelings – all very challenging concepts.

Mistakes are a common occurrence for adults and children alike. If mistakes are characterised as weaknesses and failures, or are viewed as irritating or intolerable, children will develop a fear of trying because they might make an error.

If mistakes are seen as developmentally appropriate methods for learning, children will be able to take responsibility for their actions when they make a mistake. This will provide them with the opportunity to move on to fixing the problem or to learn how to better manage the situation in case it arises again.

Not all socially inappropriate actions can be labelled as mistakes. Sometimes children will repeat behaviours or actions that are inappropriate. This could be by habit, because they are testing the boundaries or because they are upset about something else. If you teach children that their actions affect others and that they can change their behaviours, they will be able to take responsibility for their actions and their feelings. You can help them achieve this by:

➤ discussing the situation openly
➤ refraining from blame or punishment
➤ discussing the effects on others
➤ providing alternatives
➤ modelling and/or demonstrating appropriate behaviour
➤ acknowledging efforts
➤ guiding or assisting the child during an event.

✏ Practice Task 9

1. Draw a line to match each learning outcome of the EYLF to the area of emotional development.

    * Learning Outcome 1   * Persevering and persisting

    * Learning Outcome 2   * Feeling empathy

    * Learning Outcome 3   * Sharing feelings

    * Learning Outcome 4   * Feeling included or excluded

    * Learning Outcome 5   * Self-regulating

2. Which of the following statements could an educator say to a child to build a trusting relationship that encourages self-esteem, pride and confidence, and shows respect and encouragement for their feelings and efforts? Select all that apply.

    ☐ 'You have spent a lot of time on that building. Great job!'

    ☐ 'I think that this puzzle might be too difficult for you, so let's just put it away.'

    ☐ 'I can see that you are trying really hard. Would you like some help?'

    ☐ 'I can see that you are feeling sad. Would you like me to get your blanket?'

    ☐ 'Do you want me to do it for you?'

    ☐ 'Would you like to put this construction up on the shelf and show Mum or Dad when they pick you up?'

3. Which of the following questions could be used to allow children to make appropriate choices? Select yes or no for each one.

    a. 'Would you like another serve of lunch?'   * Yes   * No

    b. 'We are going outside. Would like to wear a hat?'   * Yes   * No

    c. 'You need to help pack up what you were playing with.'   * Yes   * No

    d. 'Would you like to do a puzzle or a drawing?'   * Yes   * No

    e. 'You have just been to the toilet. Would you like to wash your hands?'   * Yes   * No

    f. 'Would you like some apple or banana for a fruit snack?'   * Yes   * No

    g. 'Would you like to have another try at climbing the A-frame?'   * Yes   * No

4. Which of the following are physiological responses? Select all that apply.

☐ Crying

☐ Feeling tense

☐ Running

☐ Having an increased heart rate

☐ Laughing

☐ Being short of breath

Summary

> Children can be provided with a range of strategies to make choices about their behaviour.
> Children should experience feelings of pride and confidence as a result of their achievements.
> Mistakes are opportunities to learn, so acknowledge and support children during this time.
> Support children when they experience frustration.
> Allow children to express their feelings.
> Provide children with strategies to manage their feelings.
> Assist and encourage children's efforts.
> You can encourage children to persevere by motivating them through challenges.
> Families often enjoy hearing about their child's successes.
> Children are developing their ideas of what life is about and how they fit into life. Remember that you are part of the formation of these ideas.

Learning Checkpoint 4
Supporting emotional development

1. Which of the following would appropriately encourage a child to experience pride and confidence in their achievements? Select all that apply.

    ☐ Announce their achievement to the whole group and let them know the child is the best at this skill.

    ☐ Discuss the child's success with their family members.

    ☐ Create a portfolio of work for the child and their family.

2. Draw a line to match an appropriate action you could take in response to the children in each image.

    * Thank the child for their support. Acknowledge that it feels good when others notice how you feel.

    * Encourage the child to keep trying. Acknowledge that sometimes we need to stop and think for a moment and make a new plan.

    * Ask the child what they could do when someone has what they want. Acknowledge that sometimes we get angry when we aren't sure how to tell others what we want.

    * Comfort the child, then support them to try again or find an experience they enjoy. Acknowledge that sometimes we cry when we are frustrated.

    * Create a portfolio. Acknowledge that it feels good when you try hard and achieve your goal.

3. Which of the following statements are correct about emotional development? Select yes or no for each one.

    a. Enforced time-out is the best way to teach children how to self-regulate their behaviour.　　＊ Yes　　＊ No

    b. Babies and toddlers have trouble making good behaviour choices. They are unaware of how to problem solve in these situations, so cannot communicate their needs well.　　＊ Yes　　＊ No

    c. Educators can model and provide guidance so children can express and regulate their feelings. They can do this by talking about their own feelings and providing children with words to use to express how they feel.　　＊ Yes　　＊ No

    d. Maslow's hierarchy of needs demonstrates how an emotionally cared for and confident child can explore and find out about the world. This aligns with Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity.　　＊ Yes　　＊ No

    e. A child who has a strong sense of being able to choose will more confidently make a choice and will have more knowledge of their choices to enable them to make an informed decision. This aligns with NQS Element 1.2.3.　　＊ Yes　　＊ No

4. Select true or false for the for the following statement.

    Crying, tension, shortness of breath and increased heart rate are physiological responses to stress or anxiety.　　＊ True　　＊ False

Supporting cognitive development

Children's cognitive or intellectual development is influenced by their biological make-up and the environment they grow up in.

Infants learn through their senses and, as they grow, they develop their imagination, memory and logic.

Children learn to predict, experiment and test how their actions affect their world. They move through common stages of cognitive development in predictable ways, but at individual rates and different ages.

5A Cognitive development theory

Cognitive development refers to how we think about things, problem-solve, remember, imagine, learn and judge.

We know from the rapid growth and change during childhood that children think a lot. As with all areas of development, cognitive development varies between individuals. These differences occur due to influences such as:

> heredity
> maturation
> basic care, including whether the child has a healthy diet and is protected from trauma
> the level of stimulation received from the physical environment, including their opportunities to play and use a variety of materials and resources
> the attitudes and values of the child's culture
> the degree of diversity and variety in the child's life experiences
> the social and emotional support the child receives
> the adult interaction and support the child receives
> the level of verbal stimulation the child experiences.

Therefore, the environment and activities you provide influence the developmental progress of children.
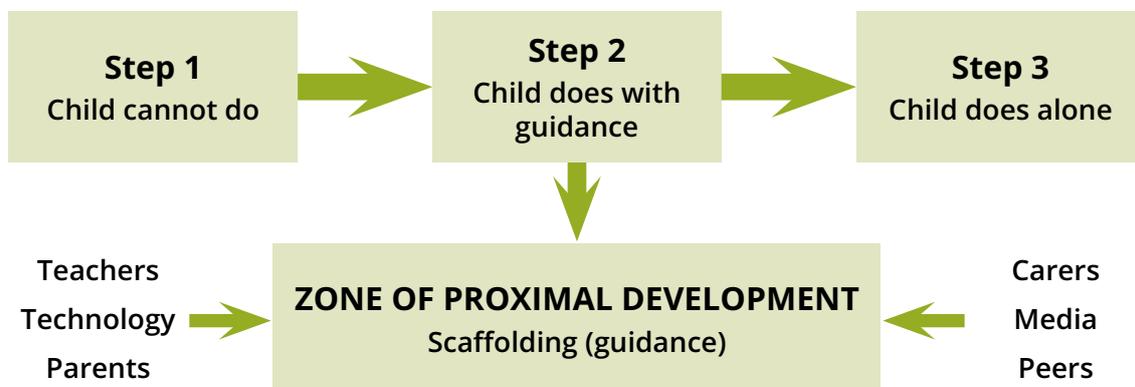
Understanding rules and applying logic requires a high level of cognitive development.

Zone of proximal development

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) provides a clear picture of how critical learning periods, windows of opportunity or teachable moments are enriched by the environment and community that children are part of.

Vygotsky shows that if a child is assisted to develop a skill when they are ready (when the skill is emerging), they are able to learn that skill and use it independently soon after. Vygotsky calls this window of opportunity 'the zone of proximal development' and it can be put into a diagram, as follows.

Step 1 Child cannot do → **Step 2** Child does with guidance → **Step 3** Child does alone

Teachers
Technology
Parents
→ **ZONE OF PROXIMAL DEVELOPMENT** Scaffolding (guidance) ←
Carers
Media
Peers

When a child demonstrates an emerging skill, they seek guidance, or you may identify the emerging skill yourself and offer guidance. This guidance is sometimes referred to as 'scaffolding'. This is not limited to just what you as an educator provide as there are many different ways for a child to receive scaffolding.

If scaffolding is provided and the child is ready, soon afterwards they can develop and master the skill themselves. You should be able to see how readiness and scaffolding in relation to the zone of proximal development fit with most of the strategies provided in this Learner Guide.

Example
Toilet learning and scaffolding

Toilet learning is an excellent example for demonstrating scaffolding, as illustrated by the following description of the steps in toilet learning and the role scaffolding plays.

Step	Description
Step 1 – Child cannot do	A child is unable to learn to use the toilet independently until their spinal cord develops to a point where they can feel the sensations required for toileting and they gain a range of self-help and self-awareness abilities.
Step 2 – Child does with guidance **(Zone of proximal development)**	Children show emerging skills (signs they are ready) for toilet learning by: ➤ being interested in the toilet and their nappy ➤ being dry for extended periods of time ➤ being able to hold on for a short time – long enough to tell you they need to use the toilet and then remove their clothes ➤ indicating that they know when they are wetting or dirtying their nappy. When a child shows these signs, they have entered the 'zone of proximal development' in relation to learning toileting skills. Your role is to recognise this and to provide guidance (scaffolding) to the child. Note that the child is also influenced by other factors. Scaffolding can be provided in the following ways: ➤ encouraging the child to go to the toilet ➤ providing child-sized toilets or toilet seats ➤ assisting the child to remove and replace their clothing ➤ making positive comments even when the child makes a mistake ➤ being positive about toilet learning ➤ being patient and providing opportunities to learn ➤ being consistent. Scaffolding is provided by things such as training nappies, child-sized seats and toilets, and clothing that is easy to take on and off. Peers provide scaffolding as they learn to use the toilet themselves; show pleasure in achieving toilet learning; and talk about toileting and whether they are wet or dry.
Step 3 – Child does alone	All these scaffolding actions work together to influence a child's abilities. Through these influences, the child develops from having emerging skills to a point where they have achieved the skill of independent toileting.

Cognitive stages

Cognitive development occurs in stages that blend together as a child moves from one developmental level to the next.

Your understanding of each learning stage will help you provide experiences that stimulate and challenge each child without frustrating them.

Developmental stage	Cognitive development
Infants	From birth to around 18 months, infants make sense of the world by using their senses and physical actions on objects. Their imagination and memory are not strongly developed, so they react to what they see and experience. An infant does not have the skill to predict what is going to happen – they constantly experiment to learn through trial and error. Many of these experiments are repetitive so the infant can determine whether the same thing happens each time. You will notice that infant play involves: ➤ repetition – by you and them ➤ imitation ➤ the use of senses to explore materials. You can support an infant at this stage by: ➤ interacting with the child positively and frequently ➤ providing objects that are safe to suck, chew, throw and bang ➤ being a model – demonstrating how to do things and how to use equipment ➤ providing simple objects and experiences so the child can explore basic properties and learn how things work ➤ allowing time for the child to explore during normal routine tasks; for example, children will want to touch their food and examine it ➤ using simple words to explain actions; for example, if a child is washing their hands you could say 'wet hands' ➤ allowing them to explore using repetition ➤ using simple songs, rhymes, stories and actions, and being prepared to repeat these over and over again.

Developmental stage	Cognitive development
Toddlers and preschoolers	Between toddler and early preschool age, children begin to use language and quickly develop their memory and imagination. They start to use new concepts and develop life skills. They become more and more interested in technology. Technology can be electronic, such as computers, tablets, voice recorders or cameras; or manual/mechanical, such as scissors, moving toys, hammers and other construction materials. Children at this stage are: ➤ rapidly developing language skills ➤ participating in make-believe play ➤ interested in sorting, matching and naming items ➤ finding out about position – inside, under, over, on, in, next to, etc. ➤ learning opposites – over/under, fast/slow, etc. ➤ interested in colour ➤ interested in numbers and letters.

Understanding concepts

In early childhood, children often have difficulty understanding things they haven't experienced themselves.

This is something that a theorist called Jean Piaget studied at length.

Children are yet to grasp concepts of counting, colour, shape, volume, mass, area, length and money. Their lack of logic skills means they may link things together incorrectly and form ideas using this incorrect information

Rote learning refers to memorising information through repetition, but without understanding. Although children love repetition and imitation, they should be free to combine this with experimentation as they learn. For instance, you could teach a child to count to ten perfectly by rote, but this won't help them attach meaning or understanding to the numbers any sooner.

Young children have difficulty understanding concepts such as volume, mass and counting.

Imitation and experimentation will enable children to learn concepts and to develop other skills along the way.

The following table illustrates areas that a child under six years may find difficult and some ways to provide opportunities for their exploration.

Concept	Challenge	Opportunity for exploration
Counting	Toddlers and preschoolers usually won't be able to count objects accurately. They may say, '1, 2, 3, 4', but not understand what these numbers mean. Counting is a concept that is often introduced early.	➤ Counting and number recognition games such as a board game with a spinner or dice, matching the number to the amount of items or dominos ➤ Counting songs such as '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, once I caught a fish alive'; 'Three little monkeys jumping on the bed' ➤ Numbers used in activities and displays ➤ Talking about number-related information, such as how old they are, how many people in their family, etc.
Colour and shape	Colour and shape are concepts children are commonly involved with early. Colour and shape knowledge is usually encouraged early and lots of practice is provided. Toddlers have difficulty looking at more than one aspect at a time. They might be able to identify a colour or a shape, but if asked to find a red triangle, for example, they may be confused. Preschoolers will have stronger cognitive skills and will enjoy being challenged by asking them to find a range of different colours and shapes.	➤ Painting and pasting ➤ Songs about colour and shape, such as the rainbow song ➤ Puzzles ➤ Matching games
Volume	Initially children learn about full and empty and then start to investigate which items hold more or less. They move into understanding about quantity once they understand number and amounts. Concepts such as half-full are complicated as they rely on a range of different understandings.	➤ Cooking ➤ Water play ➤ Sand play

Concept	Challenge	Opportunity for exploration
Mass	Toddlers and preschoolers usually won't understand how an object can change shape and still be the same quantity; for example, they may become upset if they receive a flat piece of dough and another child has a round ball, as the ball shape looks bigger. Children need to understand big and little, then medium sizes before they can start to explore mass in more detail.	➤ Scales ➤ Cooking activities, weighing and measuring ➤ Estimating which objects weigh more or less ➤ Talking about and showing children how objects can be big and light, or small and heavy
Area and length	Children learn and extend on terms such as long and short, empty and full, big and little, start and end, lots, more, less and how much as they learn about area and length. They also need to learn about and extend on their understanding of numbers so that area and length make sense.	➤ Measuring using tape measures, rulers, or everyday items such as seeing how many blocks it takes to reach from one side of the carpet to the other ➤ Working out how many items fit in the area of one flat object ➤ Working out how many small blocks are needed to match a large block ➤ Setting up the play space and talking about the area needed or the length of the bench and if it will fit in a space ➤ Estimating and then measuring ➤ Pacing out – working out how many steps it takes to get from one end to the other
Money	If you try to change five 10-cent pieces for one 50-cent piece, the child won't agree as they believe that five coins are worth more than one coin. Until children are able to multiply and divide, money is a difficult concept. For example, to make 20c out of 5c coins you need calculate 20 ÷ 5. Initially children need to become familiar with each coin and note.	➤ Sorting or matching coins or notes (play money) ➤ Using play money in dramatic play (home or shop play) ➤ Using a shop setting and placing a visual cue to the cost of items ➤ Coin rubbing to familiarise with patterns of each coin ➤ Play money made from online printable templates or purchased from office supply or toy stores

You must have an understanding of the child's limitations and work within these – when the child is upset about quantities, amounts or a situation they don't understand, you must acknowledge their feelings rather than tell them they are wrong.

Example

Understanding quantities

Every time the three-year-old children have a drink of water, there are arguments about who has the most water and which of the differently sized cups is bigger. Mabel, the educator, always makes sure that the amount of drink is the same in each cup, but it makes no difference, even when she explains and shows the children.

Mabel speaks to Nelson, another educator, and he points out that the three-year-olds are at a learning stage where they can't fully understand quantity. To solve her problem, Mabel replaces the cups with ones that are all the same size and the children are happy with the amounts they are given.

✎ Practice Task 10

1. An emerging skill might be a child starting to feed themselves. Number each step from 1 to 5 in the order that the skill would develop.

☐ The educator gives the child a spoon to hold and use while feeding them.

☐ The child cannot feed themselves and is fed by an adult.

☐ The child watches what others are eating and tries to reach for the spoon.

☐ The child gains head control and can sit in a highchair.

☐ The child starts to feed themselves using a spoon.

2. Which of the following statements are correct about scaffolding? Select yes or no for each one.

   a. Scaffolding happens when children teach themselves skills.   * Yes   * No

   b. When a child is learning about numbers, colour and shape, it is best to use rote learning where you repeat something over and over again.   * Yes   * No

   c. Children can use scales to weigh different objects. This will help them to understand mass.   * Yes   * No

   d. A teachable moment is a time when you notice a child learning a new skill and help by giving information or assistance.   * Yes   * No

5B Cognitive development outcomes

The EYLF helps you understand the importance of cognitive development and how you can work toward supporting children's learning and development.

Cognitive development underpins all areas of development, so you will find reference to cognitive abilities throughout this Learner Guide. Without cognitive function, children cannot understand or complete other tasks. This is another example of how development is holistic.

The following table outlines the areas of focus that underpin cognitive development.

EYLF Outcome	Areas of focus
Outcome 4 – Children are confident and involved learners: ➤ Sub-outcome – Children develop dispositions for learning, such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity ➤ Sub-outcome – Children develop a range of skills and processes, such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating ➤ Sub-outcome – Children transfer and adapt what they have learnt from one context to another ➤ Sub-outcome – Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies, and natural and processed materials	➤ Scaffold learning ➤ Inquiry process ➤ Technology ➤ Curiosity and discovery

You can research information about the approved learning frameworks at: aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks

Scaffolding learning

To scaffold learning, think about what the child knows now, how you can let them practise their skills and how you can extend on this learning.

By doing this, you will be helping them to transfer and adapt what they have learnt from one situation to another. Children need to explore materials before they are presented with a complex activity. For example, babies should explore black crayon on white paper to experiment and make marks prior to exploring colour.

Children might also show emerging skills, and this will signal you to scaffold their current abilities. For example, a child recognising the first letter of their name will benefit from seeing their whole name in print in various places, such as their locker, at a table setting or in a game prior to being expected to write the name

When creating an environment that encourages cognitive development, take the following strategies into consideration.

Concept	Scaffolding the skills of babies and toddlers	Scaffolding the skills of older toddlers and preschoolers
Language	Repeat babble and other sounds.	Use language clearly, frequently and appropriately, and introduce new words to describe things. Provide children with words they can use to describe their feelings or to communicate with others.
Dramatic/ imaginary play props	Use language clearly and frequently, and introduce new words as well as using familiar words.	Provide dramatic/imaginary play props and settings so that children can play symbolically, such as home corners or dress ups, doll houses and car mats.
Talking about real situations	Use toys to play imaginary games, such as pretending a teddy is walking toward the baby to tickle them, making the noise of a car when playing with a toy car or making the noise of a plane when holding a spoon.	Talk about objects and people in real situations; for example, if a child meets someone from another racial background, that person would most likely have a lifestyle similar to their own. Explore similarities and differences that can be seen or discussed, such as 'Look you both have black curly hair. Kason has green eyes and you have brown eyes.'
Sorting, matching and naming	Discuss routines and talk through what you are doing or want to do; for example, 'Let's change your trousers. You have three buttons, one, two, three. Now I can see your knees, tickle, tickle!'	
Measuring, weighing and counting	Use basic concepts. This might include: ➤ full and empty ➤ heavy and light ➤ one, two, three.	Provide measuring, weighing, counting and other opportunities that help this age group discover the properties of materials. Increase the complexity as the child starts to understand more.
Size, shape and measurement	Use basic concepts. This might include: ➤ big and little ➤ circle, square, triangle ➤ long and short	Change objects or the environment to fit the children's sense of size, shape and measurement; for example, if a child thinks they are getting less play dough than another child, make their dough the same shape as the other child's. This might lead to the children weighing the dough to check if they are the same then playing with the shapes. Increase the complexity as the child understands more.

Concept	Scaffolding the skills of babies and toddlers	Scaffolding the skills of older toddlers and preschoolers
Enjoyment and meaning	Ensure activities are enjoyable by providing experiences that suit children's abilities and interests. Make activities meaningful by including familiar people or environments, and by having them involved in and completing real tasks, such as feeding themselves, brushing their own hair, setting tables, serving food, caring for gardens or helping them read a story.	
Simple challenges	Provide opportunities and support for children involved in problem-solving activities and experiences, such as puzzles and games. Involve them in negotiation with others, such as when two children want the same toy or are waiting for something. Allow them to work out simple tasks, such as how to pick up peas with a spoon, find a hidden object or make a toy pop up.	

Exploring ideas and inquiry

Ideas might relate to a concept, something new to the child, something they have not noticed before or something they have found interesting at the time.

The ideas children have may open opportunities for exploration, problem-solving, intentional teaching and sustained shared conversation as shown in the following table:

Exploration	When children examine, try to work something out and understand something.
Problem-solving	When children are learning skills and developing knowledge, they might problem-solve to work out the answer. Help them do this by: ➤ identifying what the problems is ➤ having ideas and trying them out ➤ checking if the ideas worked. Sometimes children may need help to: ➤ break their ideas into manageable tasks ➤ identify which idea to tackle first ➤ choose a strategy to use ➤ see other people's points of view ➤ wait long enough for a result.
Intentional teaching	When you provide children with information, show them new things and support them to know how things work.
Sustained, shared conversation	➤ When you discuss information to build knowledge and skills, usually part of intentional teaching. ➤ Sustained, shared conversations are discussions that are involved and provide information. They might be discussions about something children are learning or something they are interested in. ➤ Sustained, shared conversations might occur during a group activity. At other times they might happen during experiences or routines. ➤ The ideas children have might launch or be part of sustained or shared conversations.

Some skills children might develop through exploring their ideas are:

> conversation and discussion skills
> exploring
> identifying
> classifying (sorting)
> comparing and contrasting
> hypothesising (putting forward an idea and testing it).

Children should also have the opportunity to make mistakes as part of learning. As they try to understand how something works, the child will hypothesise and use their ideas to find out what the correct answer is.

Sometimes a process of inquiry may encourage children to develop ideas. Inquiry involves investigating and problem-solving to discover something.

You might initiate inquiry as a means of learning, try the steps outlined in the following table.

Step	Example
1. Identify something the children are interested in or provide a new item or experience.	A child has brought in a new basketball to show the group. The children are intrigued by the ball.
2. Find out what the children already know.	Ask the children open questions such as: > What game do you play with this ball? > What do you think it's made of? > What makes the ball hard?
3. This leads you to find out what the children want to know.	You find out that the children would like to know: > the rules of basketball > how the basketball is made > what makes it hard.
4. Discuss the item or interest, and introduce correct terminology or language.	You introduce a simplified basketball game so that the children can play and learn the rules. You talk about man-made and natural materials, and the differences between them. You show the children how to pump up a ball and they see how, without air inside, the ball is soft. You introduce new words: 'hoop', 'backboard', 'foul', 'dribbling'.
5. Expand the topic or item into other areas of the curriculum.	You introduce other types of balls to play indoors and outdoors. These include: > small softballs and a bucket so that the children can throw the ball into the bucket from a distance > a soccer ball > an AFL football.

Step	Example
6. Be aware of children's own ideas.	Children may come up with their own ideas. They may: ➤ decide to make up their own game ➤ try to make a ball ➤ create an idea you weren't expecting.
7. Watch for decreasing interest; this tells you the children are finished with this inquiry.	When fewer children are playing basketball or following ideas around the ball, you may decide to start a new topic of inquiry.

Digital Technology

Digital technology is evolving rapidly – music, photography, drawing and stories have found new expression on computers and other electronic devices.

Technology enables such things as research, video chat, touch-screen storybooks and filming video. Introducing new technology to children can help to stimulate their curiosity and allow them to listen, see and explore.

Technology can support all areas of development, particularly the inquiry process where children can research, examine and ask questions to further their ideas.

When working with children too young to attend school, your curriculum is play-focused, which means you must carefully consider the value of any digital technology you use and monitor the amount of time it is being used. However, digital technology may spark an idea, start an inquiry, provide additional research or information on a topic, or provide an enjoyable activity.

Some key ways you can use digital technology are outlined in the following table.

Computers
Computers can provide open-ended experiences that encourage language, inquiry and creativity. Computer programs can provide children with research, stories, music, pictures and other language experiences.
Computers can help children learn words, hear other languages spoken by native speakers, create their own stories with pictures, make posters and poems, and design a range of ideas.
Older children may wish to use computers to look up pictures and stories of interest. Pictures or stories on the computer can be built into other experiences.
Items can be printed out for group discussions, stories can be read from the screen or the computer can be used for children to find information – a trivia hunt.

Music and headphones

Music and headphones (listening posts) can be used to offer small and large group experiences as well as individual activities. Listening to music, poetry and stories can be soothing and relaxing, and allow children the time to be alone and away from the group while encouraging learning, language, listening, imagination and creativity.

You can use a range of devices with or without headphones to play music, multicultural languages and stories. These can be used for dancing, singing or listening in a group.

Podcasts

Podcasts are an update on the traditional radio program format. A podcast may have originally been broadcast as a program on a radio station, or it may be created solely for download. You can access free, high-quality podcasts online produced by broadcasters, educational publishers, teachers, school children, musicians and scientists.

Content includes stories, poems, music, interviews, and magazine-style programming. You should review the content of the podcast first to make sure it is suitable.

Note: Radio is not generally recommended for use with children as the content cannot be controlled. Any program could be interrupted by inappropriate news stories, language or ads. Popular music can be overtly sexual or sexist.

Television programs and DVDs

Many excellent children's programs are available to watch as television broadcasts or as recordings on DVD.

If you choose to use television programs and DVDs as part of your program, ensure that you:

> have permission from the children's family (for the rating level or content type)
> are following service policies and procedures
> review the program carefully before showing it to children
> sit with the children while they are watching
> are prepared to answer any questions that arise from the content
> participate in any actions or questions in the program to encourage children to participate
> plan the program as part of your day, rather than just putting on the television
> try to choose informative TV programs that link with your program or interests, or a TV program that includes actions and involvement, such as singing, dancing and copying actions.

✎ Practice Task 11

1. Briefly explain the following terms relating to cognitive development.

   a. Scaffolding

   b. Inquiry process

2. Which of the following examples demonstrate scaffolding that includes exploration and problem-solving? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Watching a child push themselves along with their feet on a tricycle

   ☐ Adding a new puzzle and sitting next to the child to support them to move pieces around to find where they fit

   ☐ Providing a sensory toy and talking to the child about how each surface feels

   ☐ Providing music for children to listen to

   ☐ Including a science experiment and asking the child what might happen next

3. Which of the following are correct in relation to cognitive development? Select yes or no for each one.

a. Children need to explore their world and learn through inquiry and experimentation. This helps them to become more successful learners and meet learning outcomes.   * Yes   * No

b. The way that the environment is set up does not impact on a child's learning. Children will naturally learn in any setting.   * Yes   * No

c. Educators are there to ensure safety. Children must do the exploration and learning themselves.   * Yes   * No

d. When children are allowed to experiment and explore in a safe environment, their skills will be scaffolded.   * Yes   * No

Summary

> Scaffolding refers to educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning.
> Children's emerging skills can be scaffolded by your intentional application of interactions and experiences.
> Children's cognitive development will be extended by using a range of materials, technologies and resources that encourage problem-solving.
> Experiences provided to children can enable them to explore a range of cognitive concepts.
> Children's play can lead to the development of interests that can be used to initiate an inquiry process.

Learning Checkpoint 5
Supporting cognitive development

Use this image of children looking at a caterpillar to answer the questions that follow.

1. Educators can scaffold children's skills and encourage them to explore and problem-solve when they notice a teachable moment. Which of the following ideas for intentional teaching best suit the teachable moment in this image? Select all that apply.

    ☐ Discuss how paper is made from trees and show the children the trees in the yard.

    ☐ Discuss what the caterpillar eats and try to work out which bush the leaves came from.

    ☐ Talk about how the children are all different and get them to look in the mirror.

    ☐ Talk about the lifecycle of a caterpillar and provide a poster showing the lifecycle.

    ☐ Discuss the parts of the caterpillar and provide a magnifying glass so the children can look closely at it.

    ☐ Tell the children about EYLF Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners, and explain how this applies to their exploration.

2. Which of the following questions could an educator ask the children in the image to engage them in sustained, shared conversation? Select all that apply.

    ☐ What type of caterpillar do you think this is?

    ☐ Where do you think caterpillars come from?

    ☐ When you get home, will you tell your mum about the caterpillar?

    ☐ What do you know about caterpillars?

    ☐ Did you know that I am scaffolding your skills and that helps your understanding of concepts?

Supporting communication development

Communication development is characterised by predictable patterns, individual learning and rates of development.

All infants undergo a general pattern of language development regardless of the language they will eventually speak. Early on, they rely on non-verbal cues and gradually, at their own pace, they start to express themselves verbally.

A language-rich environment is one where children are able to practise their skills through appropriate modelling, repetition and support for experimentation.

When children are learning a second language, they often mix languages and need to spend time consolidating their understanding of each language before they are able to switch readily between the two.

6A Communication development theory

Communication is about passing information, ideas and feelings from one person to another through written, verbal or non-verbal signals.

Communication is how people interact with each other and share messages. From this, language development occurs and children gain an understanding of how to construct words into simple sentences or phrases in order to progress to conversations.

Communication involves passing on information to another person both verbally and non-verbally.

Theorists B.F Skinner and Albert Bandura (social learning theory) both researched language development and agreed that children have a natural ability to learn language and are largely influenced by their environment. This includes:

> **observation** – watching how others use language to achieve their goals
> **imitation** – hearing and copying
> **reinforcement** – being praised and encouraged to repeat sounds and words as well
> **achievement** – making things happen through use of language.

Language development

The first signs of formed language are through a child's experimentation with different sounds.

From birth, infants use communication skills and are able to react to different sounds. They develop an understanding of language long before they start to speak. Each infant develops these skills at a different rate; however, there is a general pattern of early language development.

Babies often begin by making 'raspberries' with their mouths and experimenting with different volumes and tones, such as squeals and moans. They repeat sounds and start to create patterns of sounds.

Even at this very early stage, you will notice that the baby communicates with you by watching your face and responding with smiles and noises. The communication that takes place is in a conversation style, with you and the baby taking turns to interact.

The young child will begin to repeat sounds and mimic what they hear. Over time this starts to focus on repeating those sounds we respond to the most, usually sounds that form words, such as 'baba', 'mama' and 'dada'.

Children's listening skills also begin to develop from birth. Babies from three or four weeks old begin to demonstrate their listening skills by using simple gestures like turning their head towards the direction of different sounds. These simple signs of listening develop further as they are exposed to a variety of experiences that support and enrich this development.

Once speech begins, children constantly build on their vocabulary and at around the age of five are able to have detailed conversations with others. New forms of language constantly emerge as children expand their verbal skills and develop the ability to use written language.

As their understanding and use of language increases, children are able to express fun and serious ideas, use formal or correct language, and informal or slang (colloquial) terms. When children use rhyming, made-up words and are creative in the way they speak, it demonstrates that they have a strong grasp of how language works.

The following table outlines some basic language terms to assist you to understand communication development.

Term	Examples
Expressive language	➤ Explaining how you feel ➤ Telling someone about an object or interest ➤ Asking for something ➤ Making up a story ➤ Sharing rhymes ➤ Copying what others say
Non-verbal communication	➤ Gesturing ➤ Looking ➤ Using facial expressions ➤ Hugging ➤ Making sounds without words, such as crying or laughing
Receptive language	➤ Listening to stories ➤ Understanding instructions ➤ Following directions

Conversations

The two-way process of communication begins shortly after birth.

Early on, it is babble that is shared to-and-fro, as the form of conversation begins to take shape. Later, information is passed on through words and concepts that are shared.

Developmental stage/age	Characteristics of communication
Toddler	Toddlers start to introduce their own ideas into conversation, using one- or two-word sentences. They understand much of your meaning even if they are limited in their ability to express themselves in words.
Two to three years (in between toddler and preschool stage)	Sentences are much clearer and the child will appreciate the rules of conversation and talk about their interests and things they know.

Developmental stage/age	Characteristics of communication
Preschooler	Preschoolers have a large vocabulary, many interests and lots of knowledge about how to share their thoughts. They enjoy asking what, why, how, when and where questions, and also like to be asked these, which encourages them to find out the answer through exploration and simple research.

A conversation is not just about talking. A conversation is the sharing of ideas between communication partners. To be effective at sustaining a conversation, you will need to use a variety of skills, including:

> listening
> supporting
> encouraging
> commenting
> asking open questions
> using different styles of speech.

Modelling these skills and encouraging children to develop them will support their ability to converse and to contribute to longer and more complex conversations.

✏ Practice Task 12

Number each step from 1 to 5 in the order a child develops literacy.

☐ Mimicking sounds to make patterns that become words such as 'mama' and 'dada'.

☐ Expressing fun and serious ideas

☐ Using rhymes and made-up words

☐ Making simple conversation

☐ Making 'raspberries' and repeating sounds

6B Communication development outcomes

The approved learning framework, the EYLF, helps you understand the importance of communication development, and how you can support children's learning and development in this area.

The following table outlines the key areas of focus for Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators.

EYLF Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators	Areas of focus
> Sub-outcome: Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes	> Two-way communication > Consulting with children > Group discussion > Valuing linguistic heritage
> Sub-outcome: Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts > Sub-outcome: Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media	> Reading stories > Storytelling > Props
> Sub-outcome: Children begin to understand how symbols and patterns work	> Symbols and patterns

You can research information about the approved learning frameworks at: aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks.

Two-way communication

Two-way communication can be encouraged through questions and careful listening.

An effective way to facilitate two-way communication is by using open-ended questions, as this involves both questioning and listening skills.

Open-ended questions	Open-ended questions are a useful and important tool to incorporate into your everyday interactions with children. They can also be used to effectively consult with children. This requires you to think about how your questions are worded and presented so that children will have an opportunity to explain and extend beyond a simple 'yes' or 'no' response.
	Some examples of open-ended questions are: > What is it like outside? > What happened? > What do you like to play with? > How did you do that?

Closed questions	Questions that require a 'yes', 'no' or another one-word answer are called closed questions because the response is limited. Some examples of closed questions are:
	➤ Is it hot outside?
	➤ Did that hurt?
	➤ Do you like trains?
	➤ Are you angry?

Listening

Listening is a necessary part of communication; if people don't listen, they can't communicate well.

If an adult is not listened to, they will not want to continue trying to communicate; it is the same for children.

Listening is not simply about hearing something. It requires the skills of:

➤ directing your attention

➤ gathering meaning

➤ interpreting emotional or other cues

➤ deciding on an action.

The sounds of the human voice in speech and singing, sounds in daily life or in nature, or even the sounds of their own thoughts can teach a child how to listen.

Strong social listening skills involve the ability to:

➤ engage with the speaker

➤ get pleasure from the social interaction

➤ learn about taking turns

➤ follow directions and instructions.

Some ways you can model careful listening include:

➤ Show the child you are interested in what they are saying by moving to their level and looking at them, and asking open questions to clarify or seek further information.

➤ Let the child finish what they are saying before you reply. This is a necessary skill to model. It is extremely frustrating for children to be interrupted or rushed; they will lose confidence in their abilities and be less likely to try to express themselves.

➤ Develop the skill of listening attentively while being aware of what is going on around you. Use body language such as nodding, eye contact and facial expressions to let the child know that they have your attention, while occasionally glancing around at what is happening in the room.

➤ Be open-minded so you don't immediately misinterpret what you are hearing. Listen to the whole story and try to see it from the child's point of view.

➤ Repeat back (paraphrase) to the child what they have told or asked you to confirm you have heard correctly and to show them you understand what they want.

Communication mistakes

When supporting children to communicate, give them guidance. Rather than just asking them to 'use their words', provide options to choose from or even exact phrases to be modelled.

Without your help, a child may use unsuitable words or may not know which words fit the situation. Prompting children to communicate verbally solely by asking them 'to use their words' sets them up to make mistakes.

Constant correction can deter children and reduce their confidence. Instead, they will learn best through interaction and experience. When a child makes a mistake and pronounces a word incorrectly, repeat the word to the child the correct way, as in the following example.

Example
Supporting pronunciation

Thomas is sitting at the drawing table holding a yellow crayon in his hand. He turns to Megan, the educator, and says, 'I did a lellow sun!' Megan looks at his drawing, smiles and replies, 'You drew a very bright yellow sun!'

Consulting with children

One of the most effective ways to encourage two-way communication is to consult with children.

Consulting with children supports them to express their ideas and views. Some common things children can be consulted about include:

> food preferences
> limits, guidelines and guidance policies
> activity choices
> behaviour expectations
> family involvement
> staff involvement.

You should consult children about food and activity preferences.

When you consult with children, you provide opportunities for them to express their ideas and views about matters that are important to them. If you involve them in a decision-making process, they can share information about their preferences and needs.

There are many opportunities to incorporate consultation into your practice. You can consult with children by having a group or individual discussion, or by chatting informally. Consultation can also happen spontaneously when the opportunity arises; you might gather anecdotes or listen to conversations to spark an idea.

Levels of consultation

The level of consultation and method of communication you should use with children depends on their stage of development and their needs at the time.

Try the following ideas to facilitate consultation:

- Encourage children to listen to each other's ideas.
- Encourage children to think flexibly about their options.
- Show children how you think about problems by explaining or demonstrating what you might do or how you do things.
- Accept and acknowledge children's suggestions in a positive way.
- Explain things that limit children's options, such as safety considerations, practicality or resources.
- Allow children time to make suggestions; don't rush them or decide for them.
- Make sure all children participate, not just those who are loud, enthusiastic or quick to speak up.
- Offer new ideas and encourage children to consider different interests.
- Provide new and stimulating material or discussion.

The following table outlines simple strategies for consulting with children of different ages and stages of development.

Developmental stage	Characteristics	Strategy	Example
Infant/toddler	Consultation with an infant or toddler is simple and practical. Talk with infants and toddlers as you care for them. Show them your interest by consulting them about the things that concern them, such as the foods they like to eat, the toys they like to play with or the things they can see.	Tell infants what is going to happen to them.	'Let's change your nappy now.'
		Give toddlers a warning about what is going to happen.	'We are going inside soon.'
		Attend and respond to children's non-verbal communication.	'I can see you don't like that cold water.'
		Be a positive model by verbally consulting with children and staff.	'Marsy, do you think we should put the new mobile here?'
Preschooler	Get to know the child's communication style and consult them on simple matters that concern them. Consult children to help provide experiences that are relevant and interesting to them. Some preschoolers will easily be able to plan activities with you, while others will need lots of encouragement and support.	Offer possible play choices and listen carefully to children's ideas. Use open questions to encourage children to consider all options.	'Do you think you could make something with those boxes?'
		Only give a choice when it is appropriate; it is unfair to offer a choice you do not mean. Too many choices will confuse young children; give a small number of choices suited to the child's abilities to decide. Help children to understand the choices they have; never assume children know what you mean.	Point to different items and say, 'Would you like to use this one or that one?' Be sure the options are available and appropriate.
		Explain using verbal and non-verbal communication to help children understand.	Point, show, explain and describe.
		Encourage children to consult each other.	'What does Kellie think?' 'Do you think the same as Kellie, or do you have another idea?'

Group discussion

Group discussion can be spontaneous or planned. It is an excellent way to focus on the children's interests, provide learning experiences and extend their development.

Small groups allow children to develop self-esteem, and provide a more intimate interaction with educators and other children. Larger groups allow children to develop patience, turn-taking and cooperation.

The lifespan of a discussion will vary depending on the age and stage of the children involved. A discussion among three-year-olds may only last a few minutes before the children move away or change to another topic or activity.

The success of a group discussion relies on:

➤ whether the discussion fits with the children's interests and developmental understanding

➤ how well you prepare

➤ how you influence the children to take an interest in the subject.

With younger children, you will not necessarily be waiting for an answer or decision; rather, you will be phrasing your actions as questions or suggestions. This helps the child become familiar with this type of interaction, and begin to think about what is happening in their environment.

During a group discussion, remember the following things:

➤ The length of the discussion should be suited to the concentration level of the children.

➤ The topics and content should be suited to the children's understanding.

➤ Children should be aware of any limits, such as one person speaking at a time.

➤ All children involved in the discussion should be encouraged and given the chance to contribute.

➤ Children and educators should participate; this makes it a discussion.

Engage children in either spontaneous or planned group discussion.

Example
Group discussion

Lindy, the educator, notices that the children are spending a lot of time in the garden looking at caterpillars and chasing butterflies.

Lindy recognises that this is an interest shared by many of the children, so she decides to extend their learning. She prepares some materials, including colourful resource books and posters showing the stages of the butterfly lifecycle. She finds songs about butterflies and her copy of *The very hungry caterpillar*.

To enable the children to join in and exchange views, she starts a discussion group by asking the children open questions, such as:

➤ 'What do you think the butterflies and caterpillars like about our garden?'
➤ 'Where do you think butterflies come from?'

Lindy decides on two ways to capture the children's attention and promote discussion. Her first idea is to hold a small group discussion where all children interested could participate. She will show the pictures, talk about the lifecycle of butterflies and read *The very hungry caterpillar*.

Her second idea is to set up a science table outdoors near the flower garden, where she can place resources for the children to explore by themselves in small groups or on their own. She will be available to discuss the items and to answer questions.

Spontaneous group discussion

Spontaneous group discussion could be initiated during the day to:

➤ develop enjoyment and contribute to an experience
➤ develop a new interest
➤ regain control of an energetic space
➤ calm a noisy environment
➤ extend a new interest of the group.

As spontaneous group discussion is unplanned, your presentation needs to gain the children's attention and conclude when they are ready to move on.

Example

Spontaneous group discussion

Julia, the educator, is sitting with four children at the play dough table. They are talking about Easter and what they would like to buy at the bakery, particularly hot cross buns. Julie thinks of some songs and rhymes related to bakeries, and asks the children if they would like to join in with her.

They pound on the dough as they sing 'Pat a cake, pat a cake'. They roll and press their dough as they sing 'Hot cross buns'.

Two of the children start to talk about how their buns look like rocks with snakes on top. Julia changes theme with the children and contributes to the new discussion.

Valuing linguistic heritage

In learning environments, the identification of a child's first language is part of respecting and valuing the family's culture.

If the child's first language is not English, educators need to gather information and be aware of the child's cultural heritage so they can support the child in developing English language skills, while still maintaining their first language.

Families should be encouraged to maintain their first language at home. At times they may need to be reassured that children are capable of learning more than one language and that early childhood is the most suitable time to do this. Studies have shown that babies learning more than one language speak the same amount of words at the age of 12 months as children learning only one language speak at the age of 18 months.

If languages other than English are not valued, or if a child has no opportunity to use their home language, they are likely to lose these skills. By encouraging all children to use and learn new languages, and by demonstrating an interest in all languages, you can assist children to be interested in, maintain and be proud of their language skills as well as their cultural background.

Learning English

Children who can't communicate with those around them may feel isolated, confused and frustrated, just as an adult would in the same situation.

To help children feel accepted and comfortable, you can include activities and equipment related to the child's home language and culture in the learning environment, such as traditional music, culturally appropriate clothing and props, and bilingual books.

Steps to support children who cannot communicate in English:

- Use words or phrases that the child is familiar with.
- Use body language and facial expressions to assist in communication.
- Consider the child's emotional and psychological state, and provide a secure and safe environment.
- Ensure that the child is provided with food, drink, warmth and any other physical needs.
- Ensure your environment gives clear messages that don't just rely on language; for example, don't have wide, open spaces indoors that seem to encourage running.
- Support the child to be involved in non-verbal social interaction – they might laugh, use body language and hand signals, or draw pictures – this is often a learning experience for all children.
- Show interest in the child's home language.
- Learn how to pronounce the child's name correctly – get help from family members if necessary. Insist that this name be used. Changing children's names so that English-speaking people can pronounce them correctly is disrespectful.
- Use quality books and storytelling for one-on-one reading. Family members or volunteers can also come in to assist and read stories in the child's home language. Stories should be simple to help the child acquire vocabulary.
- Model words and phrases in English. This gives the child experience in hearing vocabulary, phrases and simple sentences, and can help them understand the meaning of the same words in their home language.
- Always speak clearly and slowly.
- Introduce words, then give the child time to practise them.
- Explain activities as you do them.
- Use songs and music. Include activities with rapping, chanting, words set to music and drama.
- Display text around the room in English and the child's home language.
- Encourage social support between all the children. Playing and interacting with English-speaking children encourages development. Acceptance within the peer group is crucial for successful language acquisition.
- Support and encourage the child generally to build their self-confidence.
- Introduce all children to the language; this helps them gain acceptance and develop positive behaviours.

Reading stories

Reading and storytelling help children develop listening and communication skills as well as additional vocabulary.

Reading books to children is one of the most valuable tools in developing children's language. The children's section of any library will have a wide range of high-quality books – every child should easily be able to choose a book that appeals to them, both in education and care services and at home.

Make sure stories are age-appropriate and engaging.

Reading stories can be done in group situations or as a one-on-one activity. Reading stories with children offers opportunities for learning about the world as well as for developing language skills. Many children's books are informative and may answer questions children have. They can teach children about animal lifecycles, colours, insects, planets, families, peers, diversity and many other worthwhile subjects. Other books offer the opportunity for the children to relax and have fun.

Use the following guide to choose age-appropriate stories:

› Make sure the content is age-appropriate, by checking that:
  - books for infants have simple pictures and words
  - books for toddlers have short stories
  - books for preschoolers have more complex stories, and may be rhythmic, interactive or relate to life experiences.
› Make sure the story is appealing and not too complicated or too long.
› Check that the illustrations are attractive and interesting.

Storytelling

Storytelling is the art of sharing ideas and information as well as old and often valued traditions through the spoken word.

It allows the storyteller to share precious memories and traditions, encourages children's imaginations and helps create bonds between people of all ages.

When stories are well told, they encourage children to listen with such concentration that individual mental images will be formed, rather than the prescribed image a picture book presents. Storytelling, like reading, can occur at any time during the day and with children of any age.

Resources for stories can come from story collections, picture books and movies. Older people recalling their childhood days can also be of great interest to preschool children.

Consider the following points when deciding what stories to tell children.

Story types	What children like to hear
Stories about the child	Children from the youngest age love to hear stories about themselves so they can recall events and even be part of the story.
Stories about the immediate environment	Infants and toddlers relate to stories about their immediate environment and things that they know, such as their toys or friends.
Stories about imaginary adventures	Preschoolers enjoy stories that include them going on imaginary adventures, and enjoy an element of suspense.
Stories about familiar and new songs	Familiar and new songs take on a new meaning when they are expanded by storytelling; for example, children love to hear what the little ducks were doing when they refused to come back in 'Five little ducks'.

Storytelling skills

A storyteller should be enthusiastic about the story and want to tell it.

An effective storyteller will memorise and practise the story many times before telling it to the children, or might make up a story on the spot as events or ideas occur. Starting with familiar stories like *The gingerbread man* is a good way to gain confidence in storytelling. The more you practise, the better you will be at engaging the audience.

The following table outlines some hints for telling stories well.

Make eye contact	Ensure you maintain eye contact with the children. Use emphasised expressions.
Monitor the interest level	Ensure you monitor the interest level of the children as you are speaking. If they are losing interest, raise the level of your expression, involve the children or end the story.
Use vocalisations	Use tone, pitch, volume and speed to dramatise the text.
Use props	Use props to maintain children's interest and involve the audience.
Include chants	Have children repeat chants with you; for example, 'Run, run, as fast as you can; you can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man'. Participation encourages children to make up their own stories to tell.

Using props

Props create interest and enjoyment for children of all ages.

A prop can be as simple as putting a firefighter's hat on your head while telling a story or as complex as developing puppets to match the characters. Anything that engages children by adding another dimension is worth using.

The environment is full of props that can engage children's interest. Here are some examples:

➤ New cups could lead to discussions about colours and shapes. You might make up a rhyme to chant 'Red cups, blue cups, yellow cups, new cups', where all the children use their cups as props and raise them up when the colour is called (make sure there is no liquid in the cups for this rhyme).

➤ A toy sheep can lead to children singing 'Baa, baa, black sheep'.

➤ A colourful mobile over a change table can encourage eye contact and language interaction between the infant and educator.

➤ A different hat can change your character.

➤ A toy frying pan could be used to show you are cooking pancakes.

The list of possible props is endless and educators should be constantly aware of what can be used in the immediate environment to capture and sustain children's interest and enjoyment of language and stories.

Puppets

Puppets and felt characters are a wonderful way to enrich a child's enjoyment and experience of a story because they add a visual aspect.

They are a great extension for group sessions, but can also be a valuable individual experience or adult-free activity. Children can use puppets to extend and develop their use of language by acting out and telling their own stories.

Puppets can be a great way to engage children in the story.

Older children can make their own puppets and felt characters, and perform puppet shows. They may wish to make up their own stories and create puppets to act the story out; they may also be able to use puppets to express feelings, concerns or ideas.

To ensure that the puppets you choose are suited to the age/developmental stage of the child, use this guide.

Developmental stage	Puppet characteristics
Infants and toddlers	➤ Safe when explored with the senses ➤ No small pieces that could be a choking hazard ➤ Can be easily manipulated by small fingers ➤ Relate to areas of interest, such as animals and faces ➤ Not too loud
Preschoolers	➤ Can be made by the children ➤ Can relate to stories, rhymes and finger plays ➤ Can be used in plays, stories and theatres

Asking and answering questions

An important part of having discussions, reading or telling a story is the interaction that occurs through questioning.

The way you use questioning when reading or telling a story will help children develop comprehension skills and understanding.

To work out what questions you might ask, be clear about the book or story before you provide it to children. Pick out points in the story that are of interest or could be extended. Try to maintain a good balance between the questions and the flow of the story. For example, if the story includes a build-up or language rhythm, try not to interrupt this.

Questions you could ask before the story	➤ What do you think the story is about? ➤ Do you think this is a real story or imaginary? ➤ Why do you think we are reading this story? ➤ What do you already know about this story?
Questions to ask during the story	➤ What do you think is happening? ➤ What is this picture telling us? ➤ What do you think this means? ➤ What do you think will happen next?
Questions to ask at the end of the story	➤ Did you enjoy the story? ➤ What happened? ➤ Should we read it again? ➤ What other books are like this one?

Children will have questions about books and stories, and at times may have difficulty waiting for a good time to share their thoughts. To allow for this, think about the size of the group you are reading to and their needs. Children who have short attention spans and like to be involved should be in small groups that involve short stories. Children with more developed skills like to be part of large groups and can enjoy involved story times that meet their interests.

Most children in early childhood should be encouraged to ask questions throughout the story, as this is how learning occurs.

Once children are preparing for school, educators may feel that a more structured story time is needed. When this happens, start the group by explaining or asking the children about the rules. Remind them when questions are suited and give them chances to participate. If a child does ask questions outside of the rules, remind them gently and remember this is part of learning.

If children are fully engaged, their minds will be on what is happening. They will be watching and listening.

Symbols and patterns

Children learn about symbols and patterns as they watch adults using these in their daily activities, and see them being used in the environment.

Children typically show interest in:

➤ letters
➤ numbers
➤ time
➤ money
➤ flags
➤ sporting symbols such as the Olympic rings and football emblems
➤ musical notation/symbols.

These early learning experiences will assist children in their later success and confidence at school level. Play is a wonderful way to learn about symbols and patterns. There will also be intentional teaching times when you plan to introduce particular symbols and patterns. To make sure children remain engaged, encourage them through enthusiastic presentations and non-repetitive activities.

Letters and early writing

To develop writing skills, children first need to recognise that letters communicate meaning. Their drawing skills increase in line with their ability to control their hand movements.

Each child progresses through the stages of drawing and writing at their own pace, depending on their individual abilities, experiences and the opportunities offered. Giving guidance and understanding encourages children to feel more relaxed and motivated to experiment with the materials offered.

A description of each stage is outlined in the following table:

Developmental stage	Description
The scribble stage (infant, toddler)	The child is learning to manipulate tools and makes marks, dots and lines. The child will begin with random scribbling, then move to controlled scribbling, followed by naming what the scribbling represents.
Drawing (toddler, pre-schooler)	The child begins to produce symbols and uses these to represent ideas.
Phonemic stage (toddler, pre-schooler)	The child repeats symbols.
Transitional stage (pre-schooler)	Writing looks like words, but spelling and format is still developing.
Pictures and words (later pre-schooler)	Words and pictures are used together. The child labels items or drawings.

Here are some ways you can add written language to your curriculum.

Introduce written information	➤ Demonstrate how you use reading for everyday activities; for example, reading labels, instructions and signs. ➤ Comment on times that you read.
Provide written language	➤ Show how books are read – that is, from left to right and top to bottom. ➤ Demonstrate how words and pictures go together. ➤ Use books with predictable text. ➤ Touch words as you say them. ➤ Label objects and spaces in the room. ➤ Use large books.
Introduce the alphabet	➤ Demonstrate the importance of letters and their purpose. ➤ Point out letters and words in the everyday environment. ➤ Encourage the children to write their names on their work.

Develop phonetic awareness	➤ Demonstrate the sounds that letters make. ➤ Break up short sentences and demonstrate how the sentence is made from small words. ➤ Clap out the syllables of words.
Provide story details	➤ Introduce the title of the book, the author and illustrator, and make sure the children know what these roles are.
Encourage the use of written language	➤ Set up pretend play that involves writing shopping lists, creating signs, writing a letter or making a birthday card. ➤ Always encourage children's attempts at writing. You may not know what it says, but if you ask the child they will tell you.

Pre-reading skills

When children begin to take interest in letters, they are entering a stage of pre-reading.

Children will have seen adults reading stories and using letters to communicate. As you notice children taking an interest in reading, you will be able to choose experiences suited to their particular interest; this will challenge the child and support their future learning.

As you will see in the table below, pre-reading starts very early as children watch, learn skills and play in various ways. Many activities and play settings contribute to the skills required to read well before actual reading begins.

Development	Description	Example experiences
Matching words and letters	Children match shapes, patterns, letters then words.	➤ Jigsaw puzzles ➤ Finding your name ➤ Matching any items
Rhyming and phonological awareness	Commonly children identify the first letter of their name and later their whole name.	➤ Singing rhymes ➤ Making up silly verses ➤ Creating words that rhyme with names (e.g. Silly Billy)
Letter skills	Learning the sounds each letter makes	➤ Matching children's names to their pictures ➤ Using letter sounds ➤ 'I spy'
Direction	Recognising that print goes from left to right when reading	➤ Following print with your finger as you read ➤ Asking where to start ➤ Maze books
Motor skills	Writing letters and words, using pencil grip so they have control and then creating the shapes they need	➤ Drawing ➤ Painting ➤ Construction

Development	Description	Example experiences
Concept of print	Learning how to handle a book, holding it the right way up, turning pages in sequence, finding out the pictures help them understand the words	➤ Reading with or to children ➤ Visiting a library ➤ Labelling items

Numbers, time and money

You will be teaching numerical skills when you help children learn about numbers, time and money.

Numbers, time and money can be explored using the following ideas.

Recognise numbers	➤ Match numbers ➤ Sort numbers ➤ Create sensory art ➤ Incorporate jigsaws, posters and games that use number symbols ➤ Cook with simple recipes that use numbers for measuring ingredients
Understand one-on-one correspondence and counting	➤ Count the number of items (blocks, trains, balls, doors, windows, etc.) ➤ Sing counting songs (three cheeky monkeys, five jellyfish, five little ducks, etc.) ➤ Set up hopscotch (younger children can jump instead of hopping) ➤ Count chairs, plates, spoons or pieces of fruit at snack time ➤ Count how many cups or spoonfuls of an ingredient go into a recipe when cooking
Use time	➤ Use clocks for routines; for example, 'We have lunch when the big hand and the little hand are on 12.' ➤ Play time games (how long does it take to pack up or build a stack, etc.) ➤ Include books about time; for example, *Clean-up time*, *The very hungry caterpillar* ➤ Play games with egg timers and stopwatches ➤ Make event sequences – What do you do first, second and last? ➤ Incorporate calendars
Use money	➤ Add play money to the home corner or create shop play ➤ Discuss how much money is needed to purchase items ➤ Create a simple budget for completing a project ➤ Count money ➤ Take money rubbings ➤ Sort coins by size, shape, colour and value

Musical notation

Musical notation includes the rhythm of music and the symbols that represent this.

Some ways to involve children in using musical beats include:

> using movement games such as stomping their feet to a beat
> creating beats on a musical instrument
> displaying notes and music symbols
> explaining note value through chants
> making musical instruments.

If you pair these rhythms with symbols showing how beats can be fast or slow, you will be teaching the children about musical notation. You can find many support materials online. Try 'Let's Play Music' at: aspirelr.link/rhythm-activities, which has ideas for music, songs and resources.

✏ Practice Task 13

1. Which of the following questions are open ended? Select all that apply.

   ☐ Would you like a drink?

   ☐ Is blue your favourite colour?

   ☐ What do you think will happen next?

   ☐ Where would you like to play?

   ☐ Do you want to play?

   ☐ What is the weather like today?

2. Which of the following statements about communication are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

   a. Listening is an important part of two-way communication. This can be done by letting children finish what they are saying.　　＊ Yes　＊ No

   b. Educators only ever discuss things with the children to make the day fun.　　＊ Yes　＊ No

   c. Group discussions are difficult for young children and they should be avoided.　　＊ Yes　＊ No

   d. Educators should gather information about a family's home languages and incorporate these into the environment. This links with EYLF Outcome 5.　　＊ Yes　＊ No

   e. Symbols and patterns, including letters, numbers, time, money and musical notation, are too complicated for young children. They begin to learn about them in school.　　＊ Yes　＊ No

3. Which of the following statements about reading and storytelling are correct? Select yes or no for each one.

    a. Reading and storytelling can help children to learn new concepts such as listening and communication skills.　　* Yes　　* No

    b. Children should listen quietly during reading and storytelling and should not be allowed to ask any questions so that they learn to listen.　　* Yes　　* No

    c. Stories and writing should always be in English. We live in Australia and this is our native language.　　* Yes　　* No

    d. Puppets and props are a fantastic way to involve children in storytelling and to enhance their enjoyment in the experience.　　* Yes　　* No

Summary

> Communication development is characterised by predictable patterns, individual learning and rates of development.
> Linguistic (language) heritage should be valued and maintenance of first languages should be encouraged.
> Children rely on non-verbal cues until their expressive language develops.
> Language is a learnt skill that requires practice and repetition in a supportive and encouraging environment.
> It is important to provide a language-rich environment.
> Strong social listening skills will help children learn.
> Storybooks, puppets and felt stories are wonderful ways to enrich a child's enjoyment and experience of language and literature.
> Group discussions are an excellent way to discuss topics of interest and to encourage children to exchange views.
> Educators model language and encourage expression through language in all interactions they have throughout the day.

Learning Checkpoint 6
Supporting communication development

1. Which of the following actions would support a child's acquisition of home languages and value linguistic heritage? Select all that apply.

☐ Explaining to families that it is important for children to learn English as early as possible so they settle in well. This links with Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators.

☐ Asking families to share familiar words of the child's first language so they feel comfortable and understand educators.

☐ Including songs and stories from all backgrounds and languages to help children learn about the world and language differences.

2. Which of the following stories would be most suited to a child under two years? Select all that apply

☐ A story about a spider that tries to eat a rainbow bug.

☐ A board book showing photos of different animals on each page.

☐ A book with different colours and textures.

☐ A story about a princess who is trapped in a tower.

3. Which of the following images show a suitable prop to use when telling the story about a spider that tries to eat a rainbow bug? Select all that apply.

☐ **Prop 1**

☐ **Prop 2**

☐ **Prop 3**

☐ **Prop 4**

4. If an educator tells a story about a spider that tries to eat a rainbow bug, they may have communication goals. Draw a line to match the communication goal with the most appropriate example.

* Symbols and patterns in the environment including letters and sounds (pre-reading)

* Exchange of views and group discussion

* Modelling two-way communication

* Answering questions

* Asking questions

* 'What do you think will happen to the rainbow bug?'

* 'Yes, the spider does have eight legs.'

* 'Let's all listen to Cameron. He has a question.'

* 'Look at the word "spider". It starts with "s" and that makes a "ssss" sound.'

* 'Cameron thinks some spiders make spiral webs. Has anyone seen this?'

5. Draw a line to match each pre-reading communication goal with the experience example that extends on the spider story.

* Early writing skills

* Letters and numbers

* Musical notation

* Rhyme

* Using sticks to draw spiders or webs in the sand.

* An 's' treasure hunt. How many of the letter 's' can you find in the room.

* What rhymes with 'spider'? What rhymes with 'bug'?

* The children use maracas to make a sound for the spider creeping up on the bug and a clapper to make a bug sound when a picture of each is held up.