

CHCECE018

Nurture creativity in children

Release 3

Learner guide

Aspire Version 2.1



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CHCECE018 Nurture creativity in children, Release 3



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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE018 Nurture creativity in children*, Release 3. Your trainer or training organisation must give you information about this unit of competency as part of your training program. You can access the unit of competency and assessment requirements at: www.training.gov.au

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ These highlight learning points and provide realistic examples of workplace situations.
Practice tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Practice tasks give you the opportunity to put your skills and knowledge into practice. Your trainer will tell you which practice tasks to complete.
Video clips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Where QR codes appear, you can use smartphones and other devices to access video clips relating to the content. For information about how to download a QR reader app or accessing video on your device, please visit our website: www.aspirelr.com.au/help 
Summaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Key learning points are provided at the end of each topic.
Learning checkpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There are learning checkpoints at the end of each topic. Your trainer will tell you which learning checkpoints to complete. These checkpoints give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.



Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

- 1A Promoting creative expression**

- 1B Providing a range of materials to encourage creativity**

Fostering creativity in the physical environment

By developing an awareness of expressive development in children, you can plan and provide age-appropriate experiences to support their individual creative development.

Children tend to express themselves in more creative ways if you plan, set up and provide experiences that are open-ended, fun and positive.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard	
✓	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
Early Years Learning Framework	My Time, Our Place
Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
	Partnerships
✓	High expectations and equity
	Respect for diversity
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice
Practice	
	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children
	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching
	Learning environments
	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions
	Assessment for learning
	Holistic approaches
	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play
	Intentionality
	Environments
	Cultural competence
	Continuity and transitions
	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes	
	Children have a strong sense of identity
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
✓	Children are confident and involved learners
✓	Children are effective communicators

1A Promoting creative expression

Creativity is an outlet for expression. It is an ingredient of play that allows children to imagine, communicate, learn, experiment, develop skills and create.

The National Quality Framework (NQF) supports the development of children’s creativity in the following ways.

Standards and frameworks	Description
National Quality Standard (NQS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Element 3.2.1 – 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, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
<p><i>Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (EYLF)</i></p> <p><i>My time, our place: Framework for school age care in Australia (MTOF)</i></p>	<p>Outcome 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children are confident and involved learners. Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity. ▶ Active involvement in learning builds children’s understandings of concepts, and the creative thinking and inquiry processes that are necessary for lifelong learning.

These examples from the NQF help you to see how creativity links with other developmental aspects to extend a child’s abilities and allow them to participate fully in play and leisure.

Make sure you are familiar with the framework and standards so you can find the information you need about creativity to support your planning.



Using creative expression

Children are naturally creative. The experiences they have during their first years of life can significantly enhance the development of their creativity. One of the most rewarding parts of working with children is watching them create.

Children find it satisfying and fulfilling to be able to express themselves openly and without judgment. The ability to be creative – to create something from personal feelings and experiences – can reflect and nurture children’s emotional health.

Watch this video about developing children’s creativity.



Creativity involves:

- ▶ the use of imagination, exploration, manipulation, originality, elaboration, fluency and flexible thinking
- ▶ having the power or quality to express yourself in your own way
- ▶ self-expression.

Creativity is about how children choose to express themselves. If the outcome or end product becomes more important, the process is ignored and creativity is hindered. For example, when children are told what to do and how they should do it (such as colouring in a ready-made drawing), creativity is ignored and the focus is on cognitive or fine motor learning. However, if you provide pencils and crayons, place a vase of flowers on the table and encourage children to develop their own interpretation, you will find that some children are influenced by the vase, others by the flowers and others will express their own ideas unrelated to the setting.

When children are expressive, it means they are:

- ▶ exploring freely
- ▶ using their senses, bodies and imaginations
- ▶ making choices
- ▶ expressing their thoughts and feelings
- ▶ exploring their own ideas.

This is achieved all without the direction of an adult.

Examples of creative expression

Each child has their own ideas, interests and abilities. By providing a range of creative and expressive options, you can capture each child's imagination and allow them to use developmental skills through enjoyable outlets.

To promote creativity through play, you must allow children to display creativity and imagination in all aspects of play, particularly in the following areas.

Visual art

Art experiences are forms of creative activity that are primarily visual in nature. Visual arts can strengthen children's cognitive abilities. To enable this, you need to ensure that expressive activities are related to children's ages, interests, abilities and needs, and that you make them as enjoyable as possible.

Some common visual art experiences are:

- ▶ drawing using crayons, pencils, oil pastels, charcoal, chalk, etc.
- ▶ painting using water-based paints, finger paint, thick or thin brushes, etc.
- ▶ modelling using clay, play dough, papier-mâché, modelling wire, etc.
- ▶ construction using natural materials, recycled materials, joining materials, etc.
- ▶ collage using natural materials, recycled materials, found objects, etc.

You may incorporate appreciation for visual art at particular stages of development by providing:

- ▶ large picture books displaying photos of well-known artworks, sculptures and monuments
- ▶ excursions to museums
- ▶ discussion of murals and visual art that appears in your community
- ▶ paintings
- ▶ calendars with interesting artworks
- ▶ designs for gardens.

Inventions

Children are keen inventors. They use their creativity to solve problems, develop ideas and express various developmental skills. When inventing, children draw on existing skills and add new skills as they experiment, demonstrate and search for solutions. Invention allows children to question why, what, where, when and how.

Some examples of patented or published inventions developed by children include:

- ▶ crayon holders (11-year-old inventor)
- ▶ underwater walkie-talkie (10-year-old inventor)
- ▶ fat-free bacon cooker (eight-year-old inventor).

Inventions usually occur as a spontaneous thought or from wanting to solve a problem. Inventions may also arise from questions you ask children, such as 'How could we ...?'

Architecture

Children demonstrate their interest in architecture as they design, build and construct. They use blocks, discarded boxes and purchased kits and pieces to build things they know and see, as well as developing their own ideas.

As children develop, they use materials in more advanced ways. You can support children's exploration of materials for construction by providing opportunities to practise using the resources, challenging their skills by providing new resources, listening to their needs, and supplying additional or mixed materials when appropriate.

When choosing materials for construction, be sure that children have access to appropriate materials; it is frustrating if glue does not stick properly, surfaces are uneven or space is limited. Be aware of safety issues and ensure materials are safe to use; for example, there are no small parts that could be swallowed or sharp pieces that could harm a child.

Some common construction items children may use are:

- ▶ boxes, milk containers, egg cartons, yoghurt tubs, paper rolls, tape, glue and string
- ▶ building blocks, such as LEGO and Meccano
- ▶ interlocking bricks
- ▶ wood offcuts
- ▶ wooden and plastic blocks of different shapes and sizes
- ▶ natural materials such as branches, shells and sand.

You can include architecture in the learning environment by:

- ▶ visiting buildings and discussing what they are made of and how they are built
- ▶ displaying posters of various types of buildings and constructions
- ▶ taking photos of constructions built by children
- ▶ looking at photos of constructions at each stage
- ▶ viewing constructions from different eras
- ▶ looking at architectural drawings
- ▶ discussing shapes, colours, textures and patterns.

Sensory exploration

Sensory experiences allow children to use their sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste to explore. Sensory-rich materials provide children with the opportunity for hands-on, self-directed and self-centred activity as well as opportunities to learn.

Sensory experiences include:

- ▶ water play; for example, pouring, swirling, hot and cold water, and adding colour
- ▶ sand play; for example, smoothing, pouring and shaking sand
- ▶ simple games; for example, memory games, guess the smell, feely bags or taste tests
- ▶ play dough or clay; for example, manipulating, adding colour and scent, rolling and shaping
- ▶ cooking; for example, mixing with hands, smelling, tasting, seeing reactions of ingredients (such as cakes rising, biscuits going brown and changes in consistency)
- ▶ science; for example, mixing different materials to create chemical effects, such as vinegar and bicarb soda 'volcanos'.

Sensory experiences influence the following areas of development:

- ▶ fine motor skills, including hand-eye coordination
- ▶ creativity
- ▶ imagination in play
- ▶ social skills of sharing, cooperating and learning to play alongside others
- ▶ emotional areas, including releasing tension, building confidence and being able to work in a fail-proof way, that is, there are no right or wrong ways to do something

Sensory experiences can also improve children's knowledge of science through experimentation, including concepts of evaporation, gravity, physics, construction and engineering, and knowledge of maths, including one-to-one correspondence, counting and concepts like weight, volume and measurement.

Music

Music is used in a variety of ways throughout different cultures and religions across the world, including as a way of expressing emotions that words cannot express. Music can be used for rituals and ceremonies or simply for enjoyment.

Music plays a part in developing a child's linguistic ability, mathematical thinking, logical thinking, spatial awareness, motor skills, interpersonal skills and cultural identity.

Music and sound experiences include listening to music, singing, participating in music-making and listening to the sounds of nature. By providing a diverse range of music for children, you can encourage them to develop an appreciation for various styles, understand the part music plays in different cultures, and develop their own musical preferences and interests. It can also be used as a spontaneous experience during daily routines to calm feelings, or as an outlet to express feelings, thoughts and emotions.

Children are interested to discover the various aspects that music is made up of. Some of these are outlined in the following table.

Beat	The pulse of sound that marks the rhythm of a piece of music
Rhythm	The variation of a series of sounds; it sets the pattern of the music and can include long and short sounds, regular and irregular sounds

Pitch	The sound of high and low sounds
Tempo	The speed of music
Harmony	A simultaneous sounding of notes of different pitches; this adds interest to a simple melody
Dynamics	Soft and loud sounds; the graduation of sounds from soft to low and vice versa
Timbre	The tone of sound produced from different types of instruments
Form	The overall shape of a song: what sounds similar and what sounds different
Song	A composition of words and melody
Chant	A rhythmic speech of words or sounds
Rhyme	The repetition of words that end with the same sound

Movement and dance

Through movement children learn about their bodies. When movement is coupled with music, children are able to channel their energy and feelings through body actions.

Movement can be used to:

- ▶ communicate an image (for example, the wind in a tree)
- ▶ communicate an idea (for example, a journey)
- ▶ communicate a feeling (for example, strength)
- ▶ demonstrate a culture (for example, Indonesian dance).

Creative movement is a way for children to get to know themselves and to see connections with the rest of the world.

Watch this video about children’s physical development.

Creative movement provides children with opportunities for non-competitive, success-oriented and creative experiences that all children can participate in. Many developmental benefits can come from creative movement, as outlined in the following table.



Physical activity	Fine and gross motor skill development, stability and manipulative skills
Locomotion	Walking, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, sliding and climbing
Stability	Bending, stretching, twisting, turning, swinging, body rolling, landing, stopping, dodging and balancing
Manipulative skills	Throwing, catching, kicking, tapping, bouncing and rolling balls
Spatial or body awareness	Learning about the boundaries of the body, controlling the body, and perceptions of space, shape and distance

Sensory awareness	Visual, auditory, body kinaesthetic (for example, how to move and shape their body) and tactile experiences (for example, running with bare feet or swirling a scarf)
Exploration	Testing physical abilities, choosing movements they are capable of achieving and choosing movements that are new and challenging
Problem-solving	Solving problems such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Can I fit through this hoop? ▶ How can I balance this ball? ▶ How can I reach that? ▶ How can I use this scarf in dance? ▶ How can I move fast and slow? ▶ How do I use this equipment?
Imagination and creativity	Freedom to explore their body movements and abilities, expressing thoughts and feelings, and interpreting actions in their own way
Social skills	Working in groups, communication, self-direction, self-awareness, and recognising and appreciating their own and others' uniqueness

Example

Expressing creativity

Callie wants to introduce the children in her group to a range of different movement ideas. She accesses some posters of people involved in different cultural dances and a range of music that she can play to match.

She displays the posters and plays the music, talking to the children about which poster might link with this music. The children offer their ideas about the music, then talk about why each dance might be important to the people in the poster.

Following this, Callie asks if dance is important to any of the children. Some talk about how they have lessons, and others talk about how they dance at special events.

Callie then gives the children an opportunity to dance to the music in ways they feel the music tells them to dance.

Drama

Children have individual ways of expressing their feelings. Drama is an excellent method for doing this. By respecting this and encouraging children to be open in communication and play, children will express themselves in various ways. Their expression depends on factors such as:

- ▶ the environment in which they are raised
- ▶ the opportunities given to them
- ▶ emotional support and development
- ▶ their age
- ▶ limits and boundaries set by families and educators
- ▶ the materials and resources provided to them.



Some ways you can introduce and encourage children to use drama are through using doll's houses, puppets, home areas, and dramatic play areas such as shops, building sites, hairdressers or hospitals.

Older children may enjoy writing, rehearsing and playing out dramatic scripts. Younger children can become involved in imaginary or dramatic play naturally.

You can extend children's understanding of drama by:

- ▶ taking them to plays
- ▶ inviting actors to the service
- ▶ using puppets and props in story times
- ▶ providing a range of new and/or culturally rich materials and resources for dramatic play.

Promoting creative expression

To promote creativity and imagination through play, you must allow children to:

- ▶ have large blocks of time to express their ideas and feelings
- ▶ use language to communicate their ideas, describe the processes they use and share their feelings about their work
- ▶ express their ideas and feelings through the creative mediums they choose.

Tips for promoting creative expression:

- ▶ Encourage and acknowledge the effort the child puts into their work, focusing on how they did things rather than what the outcome was.
- ▶ Never judge the work. Each child is individual and the value of one creative experience is not more or less than another; this is all relative to the child and their expression.
- ▶ Be a good role model and be creative yourself. For example:
 - when you read stories, gesture and use your voice to dramatise characters and actions
 - join in dramatic play
 - use different forms of expression and communication
 - use puppets and other props to model how creativity may be expressed.

Practice task 1

1. Prepare either a visual art, sensory exploration, architectural design, invention or performance experience you could deliver to a group of at least **three** children.
 - a. List the ages of the children.

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b. Explain what the experience is and how you will introduce the experience.

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c. How will you promote creative expression?

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d. Identify the sections of the NQS that support you in implementing this experience.

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2. List what other elements in the NQS and outcomes in the EYLF/MTOP are relevant to nurturing creativity in children.

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1B Providing a range of materials to encourage creativity

Creativity can be encouraged through the physical environment (materials and resources provided) and the human environment (the social and interactive component).

The environment needs to appeal to children to provoke their creativity. It needs to empower young children to explore, be curious, investigate, aspire, develop relationships with others and dream of what could be.

Plan and present beautiful spaces, open-ended resources, many choices, natural resources and attractive displays.



Prompting children to use a range of materials

If you present experiences in an interesting way, you encourage children to participate. Children are likely to explore more freely as their curiosity takes over and they take the opportunity to choose how to play. You can encourage this by:

- ▶ providing an environment that is visually stimulating and attractive
- ▶ setting up creative experiences and displays, including selecting and presenting a range of props and accessories
- ▶ displaying children's own creative work along with adult displays
- ▶ modelling your own appreciation of beauty and creativity
- ▶ using creativity and representation to record aspects of the program
- ▶ considering the use and appealing nature of the indoor and outdoor spaces.

Setting up for creative learning

When setting up an environment, you need to think about how it will encourage creativity.

Tips for encouraging creativity:

- ▶ Separate noisy areas from quiet ones; for example, place block corners away from easels, and use shelves, dividers and furniture to separate areas.
- ▶ Display materials and equipment at the children's level on open shelves where they can see and access them, and choose what they would like to use.
- ▶ Place experiences and activities logically in the room; for example, place water play activities in the wet area outside, and climbing or gross motor activities on carpeted areas.
- ▶ Arrange tables, chairs and other areas to cater for the number of children you want at the activity, and ensure seats are at the correct height so that children are comfortable.
- ▶ Set up activities according to the space that is available; ensure there are enough activities for the children, but do not overcrowd the space.
- ▶ Ensure there is enough space for the child to spread out materials, move to create their desired work and use their level of skill.

Identifying appropriate materials

Children need to use materials repetitively to learn how to use them, practise their skills, develop ideas and become competent at manipulating them. Each of these stages is a creative process and is influenced by the types of materials provided.

The most creative outcomes occur when materials are open-ended. Open-ended materials allow children to use them in many ways. They include a variety of natural or found items, as outlined in the following table.

Open-ended materials	Examples
Natural materials	Natural materials include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ sand, mud and water ▶ shells, pebbles, stones and rocks ▶ twigs, leaves, tree bark, gumnuts, pinecones and flowers ▶ feathers ▶ herbs ▶ hay bales ▶ tree stumps ▶ seed pods (be sure to check if these are poisonous or too small for young children).
Found items	Second-hand materials can be donated or found in second-hand stores, and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ hats ▶ bags and purses ▶ buttons ▶ cooking equipment ▶ corks ▶ cotton spools ▶ empty containers ▶ tins ▶ egg cartons ▶ tubing.
Cloth and fabric	Many fabrics, such as cotton, linen and silk, are made from plant or animal fibres. Find suitable fabrics for use in children's play, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ old scarves ▶ doilies ▶ curtains ▶ leftover scraps from sewing projects.
Dolls	There are many different types of dolls that make interesting changes from commercially produced dolls. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ small knitted dolls ▶ wooden dolls ▶ peg dolls ▶ cloth dolls ▶ corn husk dolls ▶ rope dolls.

Open-ended materials	Examples
Blocks	Wooden offcuts make a change from commercially produced blocks. Carpentry and joinery businesses may be happy to supply offcuts for these.
Boxes	Shoe boxes, chocolate boxes and grocery boxes are great for imaginative play. You can also find sturdy wooden boxes from greengrocers, hardware stores or wine cellars.
Cane baskets	These come in a variety of shapes and sizes and can be collected at Easter or purchased cheaply from second-hand shops.

Selecting age-appropriate materials

The age and developmental stage of a child have an enormous impact on the materials and equipment you should provide, as well as the expectations that are reasonable for you to have of the child or group. The following outlines some guidelines and strategies to assist you in planning materials and equipment for children of different ages and stages of development.

Creative play for infants

In infancy, children begin to grasp objects, sit, crawl and walk. Infants use physical forms of communication, and express their feelings by using sounds and cries. They put toys and objects in their mouths, and learn through sensory experiences like feeling, tasting, watching and manipulating.

Stimulating play for infants encourages learning. Infants react to adult facial expressions and begin to learn about their feelings. They also enjoy brightly coloured objects, mobiles and musical tunes, which stimulate their creative development.

Using a range of toys and experiences encourages infants to become familiar with repetitive actions and words. Visual art experiences should be simple. For example, a crayon with a large sheet of white paper is the most beneficial visual art activity at this stage as the child can experience how the crayon works and see how it marks the paper. They will not be distracted by a range of colour and choices, and will be able to focus on the process.

Creative play for toddlers

Most toddlers scribble. Their drawings are generally unrecognisable, but they may use their ideas and imagination to tell others what their drawing is about. For young toddlers, a crayon with a large sheet of white paper is the most beneficial visual art activity. Introduce primary colours to older toddlers, but only offer two colours at a time. This allows the children to explore further and identify each colour, then discover how the colours work together. Later they can be given opportunities to experiment with paint, crayons and chalk.



The focus should be on using muscles and discovering how things feel. Toddlers enjoy sensory and messy play experiences, such as play dough, clay, slime and finger painting. They need some guidance in art activities, as they will often experiment on walls, doors and other surfaces. This generally occurs because they are unaware of the rules of drawing and wish to explore the medium.

Older toddlers are able to begin to experiment with scissors and glue. These children require supervision as they learn to use these tools safely.

Creative play for preschoolers

Preschoolers have greater muscle control than toddlers. They enjoy the same creative materials, but are able to use them in more complex ways. By four or five years of age, some children are able to draw recognisable objects, although many details may be missing. By six years old, most children are interested in discussing their pictures.



Introduce a wider range of colours and a variety of materials and ways to use them. Always allow children of this age to explore new materials in a simple experience before offering them in a more complex way. Ask children what materials they want to use, as they are now able to make choices and decisions.

Creative play for school-age children

School-age children are able to use their imaginations competently. They have their own ideas of what they think is creative and visually stimulating. School-age children have also developed their own interests and can independently make their own decisions in play.

Art materials and resources are used in a more constructive manner and older children are able to use their imaginations to visualise the type of product or artwork they would like to create. They have longer concentration spans than younger children, which allows them to sit and complete an activity of interest to them. They also have good muscle control, allowing them to experiment with a range of materials, resources and techniques.

When selecting materials for creative play, consider developmental safety and the level of learning, as outlined in the following table.

Developmental stage	Appropriate materials and activities
Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ A selection of toys valued for their textures, colours and sizes ▶ Large toys that cannot be swallowed ▶ Toys that have no sharp edges ▶ Toys that are easily washed and cleaned ▶ Different types of experiences; for example, water play, sand play and outdoor play
Toddler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Indoor and outdoor activities running together or at different times of the day ▶ Activities that reflect an interest in the world and a desire to explore it with the different senses ▶ Experiences that reflect mastery of the child's own body

Developmental stage	Appropriate materials and activities
Preschooler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Life skills, such as cooking, sewing, carpentry and washing ▶ More varied and complicated materials and activities ▶ Activities that reflect children’s increased cognitive and physical capabilities ▶ Strategies for negotiating alternative activities
School-age child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Incorporate suggestions from children ▶ Develop hobbies ▶ Allow children to select their own peer groups ▶ Provide for individual and small and large group experiences ▶ Provide choices, including respecting a child’s wish not to participate ▶ Provide strategies for negotiating alternative activities

Materials for all ages

Some materials can be used across all age groups, which makes them valuable resources. At each age/stage of development, children will use the materials differently. The following table provides some examples.

Material	Age	Use
Open-ended materials		
Boxes	Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Seeing what will fit in the box ▶ Stacking to knock down
	Toddler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stacking to make a building ▶ Lining up to make roads
	Preschooler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Creating cities, cars or phones ▶ Using for dramatic play for shops, homes, hairdresser, etc.
	School-age child	
Natural materials		
Sand	Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Feeling, tasting, throwing
	Toddler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Digging ▶ Making castles and roads ▶ Hiding items in the sand
	Preschooler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Making castles and roads ▶ Sand drawing ▶ Sand sculpture
	School-age child	

Material	Age	Use
Found materials		
Egg cartons	Infant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stacking ▶ Tapping ▶ Finding things inside ▶ Feeling, opening and shutting
	Toddler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stacking ▶ Crushing ▶ Pasting items onto or in ▶ Threading
	Preschooler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Creating their own craft ideas that are not modelled by adults, such as wreaths, flowers and caterpillars ▶ Building walls and fences ▶ Making papier-mâché ▶ Creating items
	School-age child	

Planning activities and experiences

Bring together all the preparations you have made into a planning document (this can be a formal pro forma used in the service or simply notes you make). Always seek advice on the expectations people have for you in relation to planning documents, as they vary from service to service.

A plan may include:

- ▶ the name of the activity
- ▶ the number and ages of children participating
- ▶ the desired outcome
- ▶ materials
- ▶ time (this may be open-ended or a set time to ensure the timetable is maintained)
- ▶ how the environment is arranged
- ▶ stages of the activity/experience
- ▶ how you will review the activity/experience.



Example

Planning an activity to encourage creative expression

Yan is preparing a collage experience for a group of preschoolers. He chooses a table with room for four children. Yan places a glue tub and a brush at each of the four places. In the middle of the table, Yan places a tub of sand. He wants the children to think about how to use this creatively.

Yan also wants to encourage the children to explore a range of other natural materials, so he has set out a collage trolley next to the table. It has different materials from the yard in each of its compartments.

He plans his activity as follows:

- ▶ Activity: Collage
- ▶ Number and age of children: Four preschool children
- ▶ Desired outcome: Creative use of natural material
- ▶ Materials: Glue, brushes, paper, sand, leaves, twigs, small pebbles, shells and grass
- ▶ Arrangement of environment: Low tables and chairs arranged near wet area. A tub of sand in a large bowl in the middle of the table and easily accessible. Behind the table is a trolley with natural objects in bowls that allow children to select freely.
- ▶ Direction: Children are encouraged to experiment with the materials and be as creative as they want to be.
- ▶ Time: 20 minutes

In his review, Yan will identify how creative children were in their use of material. He will also consider the following questions:

- ▶ Which children needed more encouragement?
- ▶ What skills were used?
- ▶ Could I have been more enthusiastic?

Sourcing and storing materials respectfully

Children love to go out to find items and then think of ways they might use them. Materials can be obtained from a range of sources, including:

- ▶ inside and outside the home or service
- ▶ in the natural environment when visiting the park, walking down the street or at the beach
- ▶ at variety or discount shops
- ▶ second-hand shops or garage sales
- ▶ when recycling
- ▶ donations and gifts.



Regardless of where you source an item from, and whether it is natural, found or recycled, you must still demonstrate care and respect. You can do this by storing the items carefully and considerately. You may need to access storage spaces or boxes and/or containers.

To display the items for children to use, you need to:

- ▶ have the materials at the child's height
- ▶ label containers (using photographs helps children who can't read yet) or use clear containers
- ▶ ensure lids can be easily removed
- ▶ use shelves or trolleys to display items
- ▶ separate child-safe materials from adult equipment.

Practice task 2

1. Evaluate the way materials and spaces are set up in a play environment.
 - a. Explain how the environment prompts children to use a range of materials creatively while playing.

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- b. Describe how open-ended, natural, found and recycled materials contribute to the effectiveness of the creative environment.

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- c. What evidence shows that the materials used are developmentally appropriate?

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2. Explain why it is essential to ensure that a variety of materials are provided to encourage creative expression, active learning, experimentation and choice.

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3. Plan an activity that encourages children to be creative. Select appropriate material for the age group.

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Summary

- ▶ Creativity is an outlet for expression. It is an ingredient of play that allows children to imagine, communicate, learn, experiment, develop skills and create.
- ▶ The NQF supports the development of children's creativity in Elements 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 of the NQS and Outcome 4 of the EYLF/MTOP.
- ▶ Children are confident and involved learners. Children develop dispositions for learning, such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity.
- ▶ Each child has their own ideas, interests and abilities. By providing a range of creative and expressive options, educators can capture each child's imagination and allow them to use developmental skills through enjoyable outlets.
- ▶ Promote creativity by providing examples of creative expression in art, architecture, inventions, music and dance, and through your own actions and appreciation.
- ▶ The environment needs to be appealing to children to provoke their creativity. It needs to empower young children to explore, be curious, investigate, aspire, develop relationships with others and dream of what could be.
- ▶ Environments must include a range of open-ended, natural and found materials, which should be easily accessible to children.
- ▶ Children need to use materials repetitively to learn about them, practise their skills, develop ideas and become competent at manipulating them.
- ▶ Select material suitable for the age and developmental stage of children.



Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

2A Encouraging children to pursue their own ideas and appreciate others' work

2B Showing enthusiasm for creativity

2C Supporting children to be responsible for equipment and materials

Fostering creativity in the human environment

Children learn to express their feelings and thoughts through self-expression and social interactions. They find out that everyone has their own ideas, feelings and opinions.

By encouraging children to foster their creativity, educators help children develop as individuals, reflect on their abilities and respect other people's efforts.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard	
✓	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
Early Years Learning Framework	My Time, Our Place
Principles	
✓	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
✓	Partnerships
✓	High expectations and equity
	Respect for diversity
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice
Practice	
	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children
✓	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching
✓	Learning environments
✓	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions
	Assessment for learning
	Holistic approaches
	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play
	Intentionality
	Environments
	Cultural competence
	Continuity and transitions
	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
✓	Children are confident and involved learners
	Children are effective communicators

2A Encouraging children to pursue their own ideas and appreciate others' work

Always encourage children to develop original ideas, ask questions and discuss their creative processes with you and others. In this way you can support children to:

- ▶ pursue their thoughts
- ▶ find out new information
- ▶ develop new skills
- ▶ engage creatively in their activities.



Understanding creative development milestones

You need to be aware of creative development milestones, remembering that all children are different and develop in their own way and in their own time.

The following table describes some major creative development milestones for different age groups and what you can do to encourage creativity.

Developmental stage	Creative development milestones	What you can do to encourage creativity
Infants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explore and use their senses to learn about the world and express themselves ▶ Absorb information through all their senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch) ▶ Explore objects in a variety of ways, including shaking, banging and dropping them ▶ Attracted to colour and movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Create interesting spaces with materials that are safe and open-ended. ▶ Acknowledge that creativity at this age is about the process of exploring how to do things and how to use things. ▶ Talk about what can be seen or heard. ▶ Ensure there is additional supervision for some activities to maintain safety; for example, infants like to put objects in their mouth or use materials in a way different to their purpose.

Developmental stage	Creative development milestones	What you can do to encourage creativity
Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ At an experimental, expressive and inquisitive stage ▶ Love to explore ▶ Like to attempt things in their own way; for example, seeing how many items they can carry, adding dolls to water play activities or trying to go up the slide instead of down ▶ Gaining greater control over materials, but need to use items that are easy to hold and pick up ▶ Practise, scribble and experiment with different art materials ▶ Hold pencils in a whole-hand grasp (palmar grasp) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognise that some of the actions toddlers exhibit are showing creativity rather than poor behaviour. ▶ Encourage children to think about what they are doing and how they can do it safely; for example, if they want to try going up the slide, how can they do it safely and when should they move out of the way? ▶ Provide additional supervision for higher risk activities as toddlers may take unconsidered risks. ▶ Provide opportunities for practice.
Preschoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Have great imaginations and are able to see ideas in their heads ▶ Use a variety of methods to express themselves ▶ Learning different techniques and exploring how materials and equipment can be used ▶ Learn to draw circles first, then other shapes ▶ Begin to name parts of their drawings ▶ Able to do recognisable drawings ▶ Show creativity through art, dramatic or imaginative play and problem-solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a range of creative options, both as experiences and materials. ▶ Assist preschoolers to achieve their ideas. ▶ Show them techniques that help them to be successful. ▶ Talk about the process and what they are doing.
School-age children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Know lots of ways materials and equipment can be used and may invent their own ways to express their ideas ▶ Use elaborate expression that represents their ideas and interests ▶ Can organise themselves and others to achieve their ideas ▶ Use symbols like hearts, stars, etc. ▶ Develop a sense of humour and able to make up jokes ▶ Able to represent unique characteristics of an individual in drawings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide the required materials. ▶ Encourage school-age children to reflect on their work processes. ▶ Introduce new ideas. ▶ Encourage collaborative projects. ▶ Ask questions.

Encouraging original ideas

When children come up with their own ideas for an activity they are usually more committed to it as it will relate to their interests at the time.

Sometimes children come up with their own ideas, interpretations and expressions spontaneously; at other times, you may help spark these ideas. Use your oral communication skills to encourage children and give them confidence.

Steps to encourage children to pursue their ideas:

- ▶ Allow them to do whatever they feel like with the materials and situation you provide.
- ▶ Give children sufficient time to work out their ideas. Never hurry them; let them know they can leave their work and come back to it later.
- ▶ Don't judge their efforts, as this is likely to stifle their creativity.
- ▶ Support them to think of new ideas by prompting them or asking them questions.
- ▶ Ensure safety is always a consideration.

Encourage children to work through their own ideas while providing support, encouragement and the required resources. You may need to assist children to work out what they need and how they will use materials. However, you should stand back to allow them to develop their own play and think carefully about what they are doing.

This helps children to develop a range of skills, including:

- ▶ problem-solving
- ▶ persistence
- ▶ peer scaffolding
- ▶ sharing thoughts, knowledge and information with others
- ▶ positive emotional and social competencies
- ▶ confidence.

Being creative is not just about letting children run with an idea; they still need supervision and direction to ensure they are safe. Children may need your support or require you to complete tasks for them to successfully fulfil their ideas.

Watch this video about encouraging children to develop problem-solving skills.



Example

Encouraging children's original ideas

Zeek is four years old and is playing with Evan. They have used blocks to make steering wheels. They excitedly ask Tara, the educator, to watch them. They make loud car noises as if they are racing and changing gears. As Tara watches, Zeek says to Evan, 'Go faster. I've got lots of power. I have lots of hot wheel cars and they have rocket power.'

Evan responds by saying he has a Lamborghini car at home and it also goes fast. Zeek says he knows that a big engine makes a car go fast.

Zeek then asks Tara if he can build a car. When she says yes, the boys look at each other with huge smiles and say, 'Yeah, cool.'

Tara asks them what materials they will need to do this. She encourages them to look around the room and in the collage trolley to see what they may need. Zeek picks a small box, some round milk bottle tops, soft piping and coloured matchsticks. Evan selects a large box with three smaller boxes and some milk bottle tops.

Zeek tries to solve the problem of how to keep the wheels on the box. At first, the glue isn't holding, so he decides to use masking tape. Evan is unsuccessfully using glue too, so Zeek shows him how he is using tape. He then pokes a hole in the box to place a matchstick. Zeek tells Evan that the matchstick is the car's antenna.

Zeek is very proud of himself and wants to tell Tara what he was thinking when he designed the car. He explains where the door is to get inside, how he made the antenna and how he made the steering wheel from the piece of pipe.

Zeek rushes off to ask another friend to come and look at what he has made.

Inviting children to ask questions

Children progress through stages in which they want to find out information. There are times when they will continually ask 'why'. They use this strategy to try to understand the world and its people, and to work out how they may find out things for themselves.

To help children to find out things for themselves, answer 'why' questions by reflecting them back to children if they are obvious. For example, if you say that you need to fill up the glue pot because it is empty and the child asks why, you can reflect it back to the child, saying, 'Why do you think it might be empty?'

You can also help them research the answer if the question is more complex. In this way they will learn different strategies for solving problems and finding out answers.

Children can learn the answers to their questions by:

- ▶ asking people with specific knowledge or specialist skills
- ▶ reading books, encyclopaedias or magazines
- ▶ looking at maps
- ▶ going on excursions
- ▶ experimenting
- ▶ watching videos
- ▶ going to the library
- ▶ carrying out a demonstration
- ▶ searching on the internet (where appropriate).

The more you extend and expand children's questions, the more they will ask. This helps you to create programs that are responsive and filled with interesting ideas.

Encouraging children to discuss their creations

You need to use the right type of encouragement when discussing children's creative activities. Experiences and other influences in the environment need to make a child feel safe and relaxed so they can explore and develop.

Consider the following when communicating with children who are involved in creative work:

- ▶ Focus on the process and avoid rewards. When children are not motivated by a reward, they are more creative and enjoy the process more; in a creative process, rewards are not necessary.
- ▶ Resist the urge to stand and watch in an obvious way. Being observed by others while engaged in a creative process can undermine creativity.
- ▶ Ask children about their art while they are creating it rather than when it is completed. Praise the effort, persistence, use of colour and uniqueness.
- ▶ Ask children to tell you about their work rather than making assumptions about what they are creating or expressing. For example, they may become upset if you mistake their cow for a puppy.
- ▶ Display art at child level to be sure it can be viewed by the children so they can appreciate their efforts and talk about them with adults and peers.

Using open questions and feedback

The EYLF/MTOP practice 'Responsiveness to children' encourages you to motivate children and engage them in learning by using open-ended questions and feedback that challenges children's thinking and guides their learning.

Open-ended questions and feedback are important tools to make use of in your everyday interactions with children. These encourage children to talk about a topic and share their ideas. You need to consider how you phrase questions to children to ensure they are given an opportunity to explain and extend beyond a yes or no response.

Some examples of open-ended questions are:

- ▶ Can you tell me about your work?
- ▶ What happened?
- ▶ What do you like to mould with?
- ▶ How do you get the sand to stick to the egg carton?

Questions that involve a yes, no or one-word answer are called closed questions and allow limited responses. Some examples of closed questions are:

- ▶ Did you enjoy that?
- ▶ Was that hard to do?
- ▶ Do you like play dough?
- ▶ Did the glue work properly?

The discussions you have with children about their creations show your interest in their work and help the child feel valued. Discussion, questioning and feedback each provide children with the opportunity to look at their work in a variety of ways, and help them to think more about the process and the skills they have used and will use again.

Watch this video about children's communication.



Example

Encouraging children to discuss their creations

Yann offers the children the opportunity to create cards for Mother's Day. He suggests that the cards do not need to be only for mothers, but can be for any people the children feel are special to them.

Yann provides ideas through his set-up. He places some different coloured cards and a range of materials such as glue, wool, needles, stamps and stamp pads onto the table. He also puts a range of other materials on a nearby trolley for selection. He believes this set-up will encourage the children to use their own ideas, including ways they may use collage, sewing and stamping.

As children come to work at the area, Yann finds that some children are making cards and others are exploring the materials for their own enjoyment. He makes positive statements, such as, 'Great idea, Daniel' and, 'What will you do next, Khadija?' He talks to the children about how they are using the materials and encourages them when they try new ideas. 'Dale, I had never thought to decorate the paper that way! Tell me how you do it.'

Encouraging children to respect and appreciate the creative efforts of others

Peer connection and the way children respond to each other is highlighted in the EYLF/MTOP Principle 'Children develop secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships'.

When children receive positive responses from their peers, they feel confident and are further encouraged to share information and gain a sense of accomplishment.

Everyone has different ideas about what is pleasing and enjoyable. You cannot force children to tell others that their ideas or creative work is wonderful, but you can demonstrate that all children's efforts are to be encouraged through modelling.

Sometimes children will automatically be drawn to another child's work.

This attraction is something you can build on by asking open questions – not necessarily about whether the child likes the work, but more about what they find interesting. This develops deeper thought. Some questions you may use include:

- ▶ 'Rosa, what interests you about the painting?'
- ▶ 'Lesley, you seem interested. What questions could you ask to find out more?'
- ▶ 'Kim, how do you think Justine created that decoration?'

When children are coming up with interesting ideas and experimenting with ways of doing things, they have the ability to share these either immediately or at a later time. You can support later involvement by creating opportunities for discussion and display.



Tips to encourage children to share their ideas:

- ▶ Allow children to do show and tell or demonstrate their work to children who are interested and choose to participate.
- ▶ Use group times (such as structured mat times, snack or meal times) to encourage children to share their thoughts on the things they found interesting in the work of others.
- ▶ Provide safe storage for work in progress or work that has already been completed.
- ▶ Encourage other children to check on the work that others are doing.
- ▶ Display the finished work.

If the attention toward a child’s work or ideas is negative, you may need to explain to the children how this may make the other child feel. You can speak for the child, but if they are capable, use simple language and encourage the child to use ‘I’ statements to tell others how their negative comments make them feel. For example, if a child comments that another child’s collage is ‘messy’, help the creator respond with, ‘I feel sad when you say that’. You may also comment to allow the children to learn that we all like different things and that the process of creation is important.

Example

Encouraging children to respect others

Emilie tells Shanna, the educator, that she would like to make a fairy tree. She wants to make fairy figurines and houses, and put them under the tree outside. She thinks that cardboard is good to work with.

Marcello, another child, says, ‘Emilie, your idea is stupid. Cardboard can’t stay outside in the rain!’ Shanna steps in and says to Marcello, ‘Marcello, telling Emilie the idea is stupid is not helping her. Maybe you should ask Emilie some questions and help her work out the best idea.’

Practice task 3

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Mary is five years old. She looks around the room. She moves to the painting easel and examines the paints, paper and brushes provided. She dresses in the smock provided and then concentrates very hard to create a border around the entire piece of paper using a thin brush and some yellow paint. When the border is complete Mary looks at the work for a moment, then changes to a blue paint and paints over the yellow line. Mary then puts the brush down and takes off her smock. Mary stands looking at the work for a moment. Another child, Clayton, looks at Mary’s work and says, ‘You didn’t use all the paper’.

1. How would you encourage Mary to pursue her own interests, ideas, interpretation and expression?

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2. When and how would you engage Mary to talk about her creation?

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3. What could you say to invite Mary to ask a question?

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4. How could you encourage other children to appreciate Mary's creative work?

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5. How would you respond to Clayton?

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6. Later in the day, Mary tells you that her painting is dry. She wants to make the edges strong and turn it into a frame. How could you encourage her ideas?

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2B Showing enthusiasm for creativity

As an educator, you have a major influence on the ability of children to express themselves freely and creatively. As well as using the range of strategies discussed in section 2A to encourage children's creativity, you can be a powerful role model in promoting and supporting creative efforts.

Watch this video about considering children's strengths and limitations when organising activities.



Modelling to promote and support creative efforts

The following are ways that educators can act as role models to promote and support children's creative efforts.

Be enthusiastic about creative expression

You can introduce children to a range of examples of creative expression in art, music, dance and architecture. This shows children how others use their creative energy and imagination. It may provide a stimulus and some ideas they can refer to in their own work. It also shows children that you are interested in and appreciate creativity, and enjoy looking at how others see their environment.

Be open to new ideas

Be enthusiastic and open to new ideas and initiatives suggested by the children. Remember that there are always different ways of doing things and different interpretations of subjects. You may show different paintings of the same scene or object, and talk about how the artists have interpreted them differently. This lets children know there are no right or wrong ways to express ideas.

Show enthusiasm for creative activities

Show enthusiasm for creative activities such as art, dramatic play, dance and music. Join in these activities, as children love it when an educator becomes a character or dances to the music. Read stories with energy and enjoyment, and involve children by asking, 'What might happen next?' and other questions to sustain their interest. Being an active participant offers valuable role-modelling and can encourage shyer children to participate.

Provide a comfortable environment

Foster an environment that is non-threatening in which children feel safe, relaxed and comfortable to express themselves without fear of failure, being laughed at or feeling silly. Let them know that all their efforts are valuable, but provide guidance and support when appropriate without dampening their enthusiasm or self-esteem.

Show interest in other cultures

Be familiar with how other cultures celebrate creativity and introduce some examples to your group, such as cooking, music and art. Invite skilled practitioners in your community to demonstrate various cultural activities; for example, Indonesian shadow puppets, Japanese cooking, Aboriginal music or Maori art.

Inventing creative approaches to routines

Derive creative approaches to routines. This shows children that creativity can be expressed within ordinary, everyday activities. You can be an effective role model to demonstrate safety and other issues in a creative way.

Examples of creative approaches to routines may include:

- ▶ singing a song that tells children how long to wash their hands for
- ▶ telling a story
- ▶ singing when waiting times occur.

You may also demonstrate your creativity by extending or altering the routine actions, materials and equipment you use. For example, at snack times, ask, 'Where else can you eat a snack and how can you eat it?' Responses may include at a picnic, on the table, in the yard, at the park or at a local restaurant.

You may also think about how routines are carried out. For example:

- ▶ Do all children need to eat at once?
- ▶ Should all children rest at the same time?
- ▶ Do different children need different sleep items?

Improvising with materials

Children may need your help to think about materials they could use or what their product might look like. You may be able to role-model creativity by showing children how you improvise with equipment and materials, as outlined in the following examples.

Examples of ways to improvise with materials:

Provide materials and challenge the children's thinking. For example: 'How many ways can you think of to create a bird and what materials do you need?'

Demonstrate options. For example: 'I think the things we have to make that would be matchsticks or pipe cleaners. Can you think of anything else?'

Help to solve problems. For example: 'Let's go to the storeroom and see what we can use to make a cubby.'

Provide options. For example: 'We have collected so many egg cartons, I thought we could make a cityscape for the block corner or a truck for under the pergola. What do you think?'

Encourage children to think of different ways to use materials. For example: 'We have feathers, paper plates and glitter. How can you use these?'

Repurpose materials: For example, use old jars for paint pots, grow seeds in tins punched with drainage holes and store pencils in ice cream containers.

Ensure creativity is not stifled

Creative activity can be difficult to model. If you model creativity by developing your own ideas, you may unintentionally stunt the child's ability to be creative by providing guidelines they feel they need to aspire to.

When situations like this occur, children are measuring their own success against your creation. Even if you verbally state that they should come up with their own ideas, most children will attempt to match you and measure their efforts against your finished product.

When children ask you to provide a product for them to work to, try encouraging them to develop their own ideas. Model creativity by showing them how you improvise with materials and equipment without actually developing a specific product. For example, you may show them a number of ways to use a pipe cleaner or suggest some materials that may solve a problem for them when they are trying to create a particular item.

Example

Stifling a child’s creativity

Crystal, an educator, moulds a horse from dough. Immediately, Stanton (four years) starts trying to copy the moulded horse. Crystal tells Stanton to try to make his own animal, but Stanton wants to make a horse, and he is determined to make it just like Crystal’s. When the body and head will not stay put, Stanton asks Crystal if she will finish the horse for him so that his is the same as hers.

Practice task 4

1. Explain why an educator needs to be an effective role model for creativity.

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2. How can an educator develop their skills and abilities in reading to children?

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3. Provide **two** examples of how you could use a creative approach to a routine.

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4. Which of the following displays do you think best demonstrates that the educator has respect for the process of creativity and why?

- ▶ A row of daffodils that the children have made following a model.
- ▶ A row of flowers the children have made using a range of materials.
- ▶ A series of photographs showing the children working on their individually crafted items using a variety of materials and techniques.

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2C Supporting children to be responsible for equipment and materials

When children are given responsibilities, this gives them the opportunity to gain trust, use decision-making skills and take ownership of their actions. Understanding the consequences of their actions help children to understand how the world works.

Ownership

Children develop ownership of their environment when they feel they belong. Ownership is about knowing that something is your own, and that you have control over it and can adapt it to meet your needs.



When children are given the opportunity to take responsibility for the space and equipment, this helps them feel that they belong and that the environment is theirs. Both the EYLF and MTOP encourage this in their goals, principles, practices and outcomes.

Service policies and procedures that link with ownership of the environment and materials include those related to:

- ▶ sustainability; for example, recycling, caring for plants and animals, cleaning in safe ways and dealing with waste materials safely
- ▶ cleaning schedule; for example, strategies for cleaning, what to clean and when
- ▶ health and safety; for example, safe placement and storage of equipment.

Appropriate responsibility

Always involve children in being responsible for their own equipment and materials, and to take responsibility for their own actions, such as cleaning up after themselves. As they grow and develop, extend this responsibility to caring for the environment and the entire play space.

Children may make mistakes, but these should be seen as times to learn rather than a failure to meet their responsibilities. Responsibility for equipment and materials is about keeping the environment clean, safe, enjoyable, attractive and engaging. The right level of responsibility is one that is age-appropriate and where the individual child feels they are contributing, yet are not overwhelmed.

Examples of children taking responsibility:

Randal is 18 months old. He loves helping to sweep the floor and putting the toys on the shelves.

Kelly is three years old. If she sees a child finish with equipment and not put it away, or leave it half complete, she approaches them and tells them, 'You need to pack away or else it will get lost and broken'.

Jemima is four years old. She refuses to put toys away unless she was the one to play with them. However, she will wipe tables at any time if asked.

Stefanie is five years old. Whenever she finishes working with equipment, she needs to be reminded to pack it up or reset it for others. She leaves puzzles with pieces strewn across the area, paint brushes on the stand (rather than in the pots) and home corner equipment in various places across the room.

Stuart is nine years old. He packs up the activity he is using, but does this very slowly.

Limits and guidelines

Support children to be responsible for their equipment and space by developing limits and guidelines with them. These may include how they handle equipment and resources, and what they do with them when they are finished. If children are not clear about their role, the equipment and materials may become damaged and lost. Some limits and guidelines include:

- ▶ packing up when they are finished
- ▶ being careful to keep equipment safe
- ▶ using the equipment in ways that show respect
- ▶ waiting for equipment if others are using it
- ▶ cleaning up if there is a mess.



Clear limits and guidelines allow children to take responsibility and experience the consequences of their behaviour. Responsibility comes with ownership.

These limits and guidelines should be seen as positive ways to communicate respect, and should be incorporated into the normal actions of the child. A child's day can be filled with excellent opportunities to work, play, experiment, share ideas, express themselves and participate as part of a group.

Example

Encouraging a child to take responsibility

Marika is supervising the paint easel. When Koby, four years, finishes at the easel, Marika makes a comment about the number of colours Koby used to paint. She helps Koby take his painting to the drying shelf, but notices paint is spread onto the easel. Marika alerts Koby to the paint, and suggests they get some water and a sponge and clean the easel. She explains to Koby that if they leave the paint, it will stick to someone else's work.

Marika and Koby work together to clean the easel, at the same time talking about an idea Koby has for a construction.

Practice task 5

1. Outcome 2 of the EYLF/MTOP states: ‘Children are connected with and contribute to their world: Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment’.

How does this outcome encourage you to support children to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility?

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2. List **three** actions you can take to ensure children are responsible for equipment and materials.

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Summary

- ▶ Educators need to be aware of creative development milestones, remembering that all children are different and develop in their own way and own time.
- ▶ Encourage children to use original ideas, ask questions and discuss their creative processes with you and others. In this way you can support children to pursue their thoughts, find out new information, develop new skills and engage creatively in their activities.
- ▶ Encourage children to discuss their creations, and to respect and appreciate the creative efforts of others.
- ▶ Modelling creativity includes:
 - showing enthusiasm for creative activities
 - improvising with materials and equipment
 - presenting an environment that encourages creativity
 - exposing children to creativity in other cultures
 - inventing creative approaches to routines
 - being an active participant in creative experiences
 - respecting children’s creative work.
- ▶ When children are given responsibilities, this gives them the opportunity to gain trust, use decision-making skills and take ownership of their actions. Understanding the consequences of their actions helps children understand how the world works.

Learning checkpoint 2

Fostering creativity in the human environment

Part A

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Arissa (five years) has come to the service with a bag of fabric pieces, a bag of margarine containers and a bag of egg cartons. They have been saved by her grandma over a long period of time, and Arissa is excited to bring them in and use them to make things. Arissa wants to start straight away and get her peers involved. Carly, the educator, quickly moves to take advantage of the children's excitement and the new materials.

1. Describe how Carly could encourage the children to think of some original ways to use the materials. What could she say or do? Include some open-ended questions.

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2. Explain how Carly would alter her expectations of how the children in the group will participate if they are aged:

- a. One to three years

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- b. Three to five years

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c. Five to 12 years

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3. What strategies could Carly put in place to ensure each child feels ownership and responsibility for the materials and equipment they are using, even though they were provided by Arissa?

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4. Describe how Carly might role-model creativity by incorporating the fabric, containers and cartons in the current play space.

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5. How could Carly encourage the group to respect and appreciate each other's work at the end of the day?

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6. How could Carly use the materials in a routine to demonstrate creativity?

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Part B

1. Briefly describe a creative activity, then answer the following questions. The activity might be a music activity, dramatic play, literature project or art experience.

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- a. Explain how you would share your enthusiasm for creativity with the group during this experience.

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- b. Explain how you would encourage children to pursue their own ideas, interpretations and expressions.

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- c. List **two** questions children may ask during the activity. For each of the questions, explain how you would help children to find answers to these questions.

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- d. Explain how you would encourage children to talk about their creative efforts.

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- e. Refer to EYLF/MTOP Outcome 4: 'Children are confident and involved learners'. One of the sub-outcomes is: 'Children develop dispositions for learning, such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity'. Explain how this statement would be supported in the creative activity.

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

- 3A Teaching children techniques when using materials and equipment**
- 3B Planning and creating opportunities for children to collaborate creatively**
- 3C Involving children in critical reflection and problem-solving**
- 3D Displaying children's work in a meaningful way**
- 3E Allowing time for creativity and responding to children's interests**

Fostering creativity through a learning framework

The EYLF and MTOP encourage educators to foster children's creativity through each principle and practice. These frameworks guide you toward outcomes that respect children's ideas and support learning in ways children enjoy and understand.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
✓	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	
Early Years Learning Framework	My Time, Our Place	
Principles		
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
✓	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
✓	Learning through play	Learning through play
✓	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
✓	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity	
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
✓	Children are confident and involved learners	
✓	Children are effective communicators	

3A Teaching children techniques when using materials and equipment

It is essential that children are taught how to use materials and equipment correctly and safely. Being unsure about how to use something may inhibit a child's ability to express themselves freely as they may be reluctant to use the material or equipment. Once a child is familiar with a specific material or piece of equipment and can confidently use it, their ability to be creative increases as they can concentrate on the activity and not worry about the technical aspects. Their repertoire of possibilities also increases; a technique may encourage a child's ideas.



As an educator, you have a responsibility and a duty of care to provide advice and demonstrate to children the most effective way to use materials and equipment. For example, all children should be taught how to use scissors safely. Without holding them correctly, a child cannot cut effectively and this will hinder their creative abilities.

Always remember that actions adults take for granted, such as wiping a paint brush on the side of the pot before painting to remove excess paint, are things that children have to learn, even if they have observed adults doing them.

Some ways of teaching children how to use materials and equipment include:

- ▶ Demonstrating – Showing them what to do
- ▶ Problem-solving – Asking children how they may resolve an issue or how they may identify a better way to do something
- ▶ Providing options and ideas – Showing children options and explaining the outcome each would provide, then supporting the child to achieve this
- ▶ Exploring – Offering different options and working together to find out how each works and which one suits best
- ▶ Exchanging equipment – Explaining to the child the risks that are occurring and providing them with safer options, particularly when safety is a concern
- ▶ Trial and error – Allowing the children to explore and find out what happens and how things work, while ensuring they are safe and the materials and equipment are being cared for

Techniques for using different materials and equipment

Some techniques children should learn for using different materials and equipment are shown in the following table.

Equipment/ material	Techniques for use
Brushes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Wiping off excess paint before using ▶ Using the brush section to gain greatest control and coverage
Scissors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Holding techniques; for example, how to hold the paper in one hand while cutting with the other
Home corner equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How all the different equipment is used; for example, chopsticks, coffee maker and different ways to wear dress-ups
Computer/tablet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How to access programs
Fasteners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How to do up and undo zips, buttons, velcro, laces, cords, etc.
Musical instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children can use these creatively, but they may need to be shown their real use; for example, a triangle can be struck to make a noise, but it only works properly if you hold the string
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Flinging light materials into the air to make them float ▶ Spinning ribbons in the air by flicking wrists
Puppets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Opening and shutting the mouth with a hand (hand puppet) ▶ Moving strings can make the puppet dance or walk (string puppet) ▶ Putting one or two fingers in (finger puppet)
Construction sets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How the pieces attach to each other ▶ How balance works
Train sets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How to put the track sections together
Nuts and bolts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How different sizes and threads fit together
Hammer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How to hold a nail so you hit its head, not your fingers
Pegs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How to use fingers to squeeze them open
Thread	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ How to tie off so the beads don't fall off the end ▶ How to hold the string or cord so there is enough to thread the bead on, but not so much that it flops over and is not rigid
Glue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Different glues for different strength requirements

Equipment/ material	Techniques for use
Hole punches, staplers, tape, stamps	▶ Pushing, pressing, loading or cutting
Compass, ruler or stencils	▶ How to make circles or lines
Paint	▶ Mixing colours

In addition to knowing how to operate equipment and materials, you can also teach children creative techniques. However, try not to impose your own ideas on when to use them. This often involves showing older children how effects can be created; for example:

- ▶ Painting with water paint over crayon, particularly white crayon on white paper with coloured paint
- ▶ Watering down paint so that it gives a water colour feel
- ▶ Mulching paper to make papier-mâché, then creating objects with this material
- ▶ Using a marble or wool to create paint tracks
- ▶ Using sticks and paint made from earth to develop dot paintings, or using recognised Aboriginal characters to paint a story
- ▶ Making pompoms with wool
- ▶ Doing pressings and rubbings

Options are endless and can link with known art forms; for example, you can show Indigenous art forms and then teach techniques, or hang a water colour painting and encourage children to use water colours to create their own paintings. Remember that children must have time to practise and experiment, and they may come up with their own techniques to create their ideas. They may also use the materials in different ways than you suggest, which should be encouraged unless it is dangerous or damages equipment or materials.

Practice task 6

Using an example, explain how you would teach a child the technique for using a particular material or piece of equipment.

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3B Planning and creating opportunities for children to collaborate creatively

The EYLF and MTOP use the word ‘collaborate’ to discuss how children can work together to achieve their goals. When children collaborate creatively, they are working together in a process that involves using individual ideas, sharing these ideas and coming up with solutions that everyone is happy with. Children begin to contribute through collaboration from late toddler age (around three years).



Not only are children gaining skills through collaboration such as problem-solving, communication and negotiation, children’s creativity often benefits from collaboration as it allows them to gain different viewpoints, understand alternative techniques and models of work, and share their expression with others. Self-esteem can be built and improved through success.

Seek out opportunities to plan or create collaborative projects. There may be a project that you feel all children should have a chance to participate in, or there may be two or more children with similar ideas working individually on projects that you feel would develop more depth if collaboration occurred.

Example

Encouraging children to collaborate

Carlene, an educator, watches Des building a traffic sign out of boxes. He is trying to tape three boxes together to make a large rectangle shape. Lindee is building a car out of a large box. She uses paper plates to add headlights, but is having trouble cutting a door. Carlene suggests that Des and Lindee collaborate together. Lindee can help Des by holding the boxes while he uses the tape, and Des can help Lindee cut by holding the box in position. Later they can use both their creations to become involved in dramatic play.

After lunch, Carlene notices that Hakan is showing some children how he can somersault and do handstands. Rea and Gale are watching. Carlene asks if Rea and Gale can do gymnastics or if they know any dance moves. Gale says he goes to tap classes, and Rea says she likes ballet even though she doesn’t go to classes. Carlene suggests the children show what they can do and work together to make a show for the other children.

Later that day, Carlene speaks to the whole group and asks if anyone is interested in collaborating to paint a mural on the brick wall. She shows the children a photo of a mural in the community and explains how it was done. Four children indicate their interest, so Carlene starts to work with these children to develop a suitable design.

Collaboration strategies

At times, children will need your direction, as working in groups can be challenging. Common and useful strategies you can use to support collaboration include:

- ▶ encouraging small group experiences; collaboration will often occur naturally
- ▶ asking for children’s help; for example, ‘Can anyone help Jane balance these blocks?’
- ▶ offering open-ended resources and asking how they could be used; children will come up with and share ideas for how to use the materials
- ▶ having children work in pairs during group activities; for example, dancing together or acting out a role-play
- ▶ presenting ongoing community activities; for example, painting on a large roll or sheet of paper that covers the whole table area, or completing colour squares or pompoms that will be put together to create a larger project
- ▶ developing project groups; for example, designing a display or a new part of the yard.

Practice task 7

Participate in or observe a collaborative experience with children. Identify the ways the children collaborated to make decisions about the creative outcomes.

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3C Involving children in critical reflection and problem-solving

The EYLF and MTOP practice 'Learning through play' reminds you that play is a time for children to ask questions, solve problems and engage in critical thinking. It is the educator's role to provide a supportive environment where these thinking processes can occur safely.

Reflecting on their work

Critical reflection is a skill used to examine an issue from different perspectives.

When children are reflecting critically on their creative work, they are thinking about:

- ▶ how the process felt
- ▶ what skills they used and what skills they learnt
- ▶ how they can describe their work and the process
- ▶ how it feels to have accomplished their ideas
- ▶ how it feels to be finished or whether they feel the work is not finished yet
- ▶ what they could do next.

Critical reflection helps children focus on the process rather than the product. The questions you ask to enable critical reflection should lead them to the process. For example, compare the following questions:

- ▶ 'Do you like what you made?' is a reflection on the end product. It is about being critical and not so much about reflection.
- ▶ 'How did you get those thin lines so straight?' is a question that helps critical reflection and productive thought.

You can engage children in critical reflection either while they are working on a creative project or afterwards. Your thoughtful comments can add to the depth of the children's activity, regardless of their age.

Try to avoid interrupting a child's work if they appear to be concentrating deeply. Instead, allow children to learn that when you watch them working, you are showing interest in what they are doing.

Critical reflection questions also help you demonstrate your interest. You may say things like, 'I enjoy watching you work', 'Your concentration is amazing' or 'You seem to enjoy doing this'.



Solving problems

The EYLF and MTOP suggest that learning environments should encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct.

Children may come up against problems when working on their creative pursuits that cause them to stop and work out how to proceed. Children of all ages may become upset if a problem occurs. Infants and toddlers in particular may become distracted or upset when this happens, which may cause their creative activity to be interrupted.

The problems children face during creative work are often unlike other problems, such as how to solve a puzzle or where they will sit at a busy group time. When children solve problems, their creative work may take new directions depending on how their problems are resolved. For example, if a child is trying to attach two materials together and they cannot do so, the work will be altered if they decide to use different materials or to leave out the attachment.

To encourage children to think critically and develop strong problem-solving skills, it is useful to encourage creative thinking about the situation and to have the child identify as many resolutions as they can.

When children run into problems while completing creative work, encourage them to use their creativity to solve the problems. Doing so helps them to develop stronger:

- ▶ self-esteem and confidence
- ▶ thinking and reasoning skills
- ▶ communication skills
- ▶ knowledge about issues and consequences
- ▶ understanding of emotions.

In many situations, your role is to help children find out what the real problem is. They may demonstrate frustration and express this in a variety of ways. All educators should be aware of verbal cues and what they may mean, as shown in the following table.

What they might say verbally	What cues they might give
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 'I can't do this.' ▶ 'This is too hard.' ▶ 'I don't want to do this.' ▶ 'This is stupid.' ▶ 'I am stupid.' ▶ 'You need to do it for me.' ▶ 'I am no good.' ▶ 'Why can't I do it?' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Frowning ▶ Growling or making aggressive sounds ▶ Stopping work ▶ Working on the task, but not progressing ▶ Asking you to do the task ▶ Telling you they can't do it ▶ Being aggressive; for example, throwing materials, sweeping the activity off the table or interrupting others

Your task is to help the child move past these feelings and help them succeed. Some actions you can take include:

- ▶ acknowledging their feelings
- ▶ identifying what the issue is
- ▶ brainstorming to find solutions
- ▶ selecting the most suitable idea
- ▶ checking back later to ensure all went well.



Example

Encouraging children to solve problems

Jade, an educator, is working with a group of preschoolers who are building in the sand. The children are trying to build a castle formed with a bucket and a moat around the outside. Each time the sand is turned out of the bucket, the castle collapses. Jade notices the children are getting frustrated, and they are starting to blame each other: ‘Ann, you keep doing it!’, ‘Karla, why did you pull the bucket so fast’, ‘I told you it wasn’t full enough’.

Jade acknowledges the problem and helps them work out what they need to focus on. She asks, ‘What seems to be the problem here?’ Each child tells her that other children are doing the wrong thing. Jade helps them to see the problem differently. ‘You all seem to be getting frustrated. Do you think you are doing something wrong or is the sand the problem?’ The children agree that it is probably the sand. They brainstorm and come up with a few ideas about what they could do:

- ▶ Don’t worry about it.
- ▶ Add water.
- ▶ Get a different bucket.
- ▶ Build the castle with hands instead.
- ▶ Pat the sand down hard.

After talking about the issue, they decide they will try getting some water as they want this for the moat anyway. They try this and it works so well that they make a plan to extend the size of the castle.

Jade stays nearby to ensure the children are successful and to support their use of the water.

Practice task 8

Write about a time when you helped children critically reflect on their work and solve a problem.

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3D Displaying children's work in a meaningful way

When children's work is displayed respectfully and with their permission, it presents a message that they are valued and that their work is worthwhile. It also enables them to feel a sense of belonging and of being supported.

Thoughtful and meaningful displays of creative work result in:

- ▶ exciting and stimulating environments
- ▶ promoting value for each child and their skills
- ▶ conveying ideas and concepts
- ▶ learning tools for future discussion.



Presenting displays

Appropriate displays should present work that is individual and shows evidence of how the child thought about or valued the creative process. Displays that show repetition and all children doing things the same way are not creative or meaningful. Such displays only demonstrate the child's ability to copy models and cognitively or physically complete tasks.

Displays should be set up thoughtfully at child level so the work can be shared with peers and give everyone the chance to discuss the pieces. When developing a display:

- ▶ identify what the purpose is; for example, to showcase work, to support learning or to reinforce a skill
- ▶ collect all the items, allowing children to help
- ▶ plan the space out; ensure it is safe, uncluttered and clear
- ▶ mount the display in creative ways.

Seek out the service's policies and procedures for displaying work and decorating the environment.

Consider and discuss these questions with colleagues:

- ▶ Do displays of children's work focus on the end product or do they value the process of development?
- ▶ Will some children feel their work is being judged or feel inferior to others if their work is not displayed?
- ▶ Should you ask the child if you may display their work before doing so?
- ▶ How would a child feel if their work is not displayed?
- ▶ If children have not produced work for display, will they be under-represented in the room?
- ▶ Should children be pressured to perform and produce products for display or any other purpose?

Naming children's work

Consider how or whether you should name children's work:

- ▶ Does naming work change it in some way?
- ▶ Should you ask the child for permission before you name their work?
- ▶ Should names be placed on the back or underside of the work?
- ▶ If you name the work, does this turn the focus to the product rather than the process?



You will be able to involve older children in discussions and decisions relating to these areas of concern. You should also refer to your service's policies and procedures.

Children can help develop, plan, prepare for and create displays, which will allow them further feelings of ownership, respect for others' work and a greater opportunity for creative expression.

You can find lots of creative ideas for displays online, particularly at Pinterest (<http://aspirelr.link/pinterest>).

Practice task 9

Refer to a display currently in your service or a photo of a display in a service, and answer the following questions.

1. Explain how it is meaningful and how it demonstrates value toward the children's creativity.

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2. Do you think the display could be improved? If yes, in what ways?

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3E Allowing time for creativity and responding to children's interests

The EYLF and MTOP both identify that learning outcomes occur over time. A child's creative expression is influenced by the environment and context in which they are undertaking an activity, their current abilities and the time they have to work through their ideas and reflect on their work. Children need time to engage with others, develop an experience from a group activity into their own individual thoughts and ideas, or develop an individual idea into a group experience. They also need time to practise their skills, and develop and reinforce new ones. This is part of an ongoing cycle.



Giving children sufficient time to express themselves

Creativity does not always come at appropriate times. For example, a child may come up with an excellent idea when you are winding up a project or just beginning a discussion session. You may want to move to a meal or snack time, get children to sleep or prepare to go home.

While you may need to continue with the day's program, use your child-centred practice to demonstrate the importance of children's creativity. You may simply extend the time allowed so that the creative activity can be completed. Alternatively, you could:

- ▶ take a photo of where the children are up to if the situation can be created again to match
- ▶ put up a 'Please leave alone' or 'Work in progress' sign so that others know it must not be packed up
- ▶ take notes or record information so that the ideas are remembered
- ▶ explain when there will be more time and remember to follow through
- ▶ ask the children how they would like to arrange their situation.

You may need to inform cleaners and/or other educators to enable some creative ideas to be built upon over days or weeks. This may mean that children take responsibility for some part of the service or curriculum requirements, such as:

- ▶ helping to clean around the area using their own brooms and mops, so that the space is still clean
- ▶ moving other equipment so there is space available for beds/mattresses at sleep/rest times
- ▶ packing other activities away so there is space for meal times or snacks
- ▶ moving the activity to a place out of the way
- ▶ creating a sign, note or letter that indicates that the work is in progress
- ▶ taking drawings and pictures so that they can rebuild or create it at a later time.

Example

Providing sufficient time for creativity

Elise, five years, works in the home corner using the colourful lengths of material for the first time. She looks at and feels each of the different pieces. She talks to others and watches how they dress. Over the session she drapes, wraps and models materials and outfits.

At home, Elise thinks about the dress-ups. She realises that if she wraps the large pieces of material around her body, she can make a skirt and scarf. She knows that the same experience will be available tomorrow so she can try this then.

The next morning, Elise is excited to go to the service and return to the material to try out her ideas.

Responding to children's interests

Each child has their own set of interests that can be used to extend their skills and knowledge, encourage creativity and enhance their enjoyment of their time at the service. These interests may be identified through discussions with the child and their family, during a planned activity, or may emerge spontaneously. For example:

- ▶ a child may have always had an interest in construction and buildings
- ▶ a child may become interested in snakes during an excursion and a wildlife talk by an expert
- ▶ a child's interest in fires and firefighters may be enhanced by a visit from the fire brigade.

To respond appropriately to interests, you should observe, listen to and ask questions as children go about their activities. You also need to think creatively, and be open to new ideas and different ways to use materials and equipment. Ensure your learning framework is flexible enough to be able to adapt planned activities and experiences to respond effectively to spontaneous ideas.

Responding to new and unforeseen interests that arise means more than just a quick acknowledgment. It means reacting positively to the child by taking the interest further and exploring possibilities through discussion with the child and others in the group. This creates a responsive program as it links community, home and care through things children know or find out. It also shows that you value their ideas and gives you the opportunity to extend their skills.

Always aim to do the following to promote creativity:

- ▶ Allow children time to explore their ideas by being flexible in your schedules.
- ▶ Provide appropriate materials and resources.
- ▶ Enable children to continue playing or investigating if it is practical and reasonable to do so.

Example

Changing the timetable in response to children’s interests

Osias and Maude (both five years old) are playing together in the home corner. Maude begins to talk to Osias about the gymnastic event she and her sister competed in on the weekend. Osias asks Maude what gymnastics is. Maude replies that it is rolling and tumbling, and dancing with a ribbon.

Zack, the educator, overhears the conversation and moves close to the children. He tells Maude that he thinks gymnastics is interesting. He asks if Maude knows how to do gymnastics and if she would like to show the other children. Maude agrees and they talk about what she needs.

Together Zack, Maude and Osias organise the space, some music and equipment, and invite other children to watch. Maude dances, rolls and jumps to the music, using her ribbon to twirl and spin in the air.

After the demonstration, Zack asks if other children would like to try gymnastics. A number of children agree, so they each take hold of a ribbon and Zack plays more dance music while the children move around the space.

According to the timetable, Zack should have held an organised group time at this point in the day. However, he decides this spontaneous gymnastic group is more valuable and allows it to continue. He offers the group time later in the day.

Practice task 10

1. Find out about a service’s policies and procedures. How do they support children to continue activities that meet their interests over a number of days or weeks?

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2. What options are there for a flexible learning framework? You may need to talk to a supervisor or educational leader. List some of these options and outline whether any of them are possible.

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3. Explain what you would do if a small group of children want to build a cubby house from food boxes in an area that is currently being used for block building. The children will take three days to build the cubby, which they would then like to use for dramatic play.

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Summary

- ▶ It is essential that children are taught how to use materials and equipment correctly and safely. You have a responsibility and duty of care to provide advice, and show children the most effective way to use materials and equipment.
- ▶ When children collaborate creatively, they are working together using individual ideas, sharing these ideas and coming up with solutions that all are happy to participate in.
- ▶ Seek out opportunities for collaboration, such as:
 - encouraging small group experiences
 - asking for children’s help
 - working in pairs during group activities
 - developing whole group projects.
- ▶ Critical reflection is a skill used to examine something from different perspectives.
- ▶ Encourage children to think critically and develop strong skills in problem-solving when faced with a difficult situation.
- ▶ Display children’s work with their permission thoughtfully and respectfully so they feel their work is valued.
- ▶ Respond to children’s interests as they arise if it is appropriate.
- ▶ Be flexible with your timetable to allow children’s creativity and interests to develop and be pursued over a period of time.

Learning checkpoint 3

Fostering creativity through a learning framework

Part A

Read the case study, then answer the questions that follow. Use a service’s curriculum, policies and procedures as your basis for decision-making.

Case study

You are holding a group-time activity with eight children. You tell a story using a puppet you have made yourself and the children are excited, all wanting to see how it works.

You decide that the children’s interest in hand puppets is worth pursuing as a series of creative activities.

You want the children to be involved at all points, from planning to performing puppet shows. You realise that one thing you could do is set up a puppet theatre.

1. Briefly describe **four** activities you could offer the children to help them plan and perform a puppet show. Include information about when they would be offered and include the age of the children you are considering.

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2. Describe how you would encourage children to collaborate during the implementation of the four activities, and what they would achieve through collaboration.

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3. How would you allow time for the children to be creative?

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4. For each of the four activities, list **two** questions that you could ask to encourage the children to reflect on the process of their activity.

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5. Identify one problem or issue that may arise during each of the four activities. For each problem or issue, explain how you would help the children resolve it.

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Part B

1. Prepare a 'How to' guide for educators on techniques to teach children when using materials and equipment (include at least 10 tips and clarify which age group of children you are targeting).
2. Explain how you can display children's work in meaningful ways.

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Topic 4

In this topic you will learn about:

4A Providing a creative environment

4B Providing experiences to develop children's skills

Providing experiences to develop children's skills and creativity

As an educator, you have an important role to play in assisting children to explore their creative abilities by providing a range of opportunities for creative experiences and exposing them to different ways they can express themselves – through music, movement, construction, art and dramatic play.

By developing an awareness of expressive development in children, you can plan and provide age-appropriate experiences to support each child's individual creative development.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard	
✓	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
Early Years Learning Framework	My Time, Our Place
Principles	
✓	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
✓	Partnerships
✓	High expectations and equity
	Respect for diversity
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice
Practice	
	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children
✓	Learning through play
✓	Intentional teaching
✓	Learning environments
	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning
Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity
✓	Children are connected to and contribute to their world
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
✓	Children are confident and involved learners
✓	Children are effective communicators

4A Providing a creative environment

Creative and aesthetically pleasing experiences are an essential part of a service's curriculum and should be offered throughout the day in both indoor and outdoor experiences. By working in areas separate from other types of play, children have the opportunity to concentrate on their creative ideas.

Children may also come up with their own ideas and turn experiences chosen by you into creative activities. When this occurs, your role is to support the change or evolution and provide assistance, materials, resources and space as required.



Providing a creative environment

To effectively nurture children's creativity, you need to be familiar with the NQS, the EYLF and the MTOP, and how they support your creative curriculum, as outlined in the following tables.

NQS		
	Reference	How it guides your actions
Element 1.1.1	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Experiences provided for children should include those that engage children in exploring arts. ▶ Children should be encouraged and supported to develop agency through investigating their own ideas.
Element 1.1.2	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ You must focus on what is meaningful to children now and on open-ended creative activities that promote self-expression, which are flexible enough to allow children to work at their own level and pace. ▶ Children can support each other to learn. ▶ Children can explore ideas through play and use of imagination.

NQS		
Reference		How it guides your actions
Element 1.2.2	Educators respond to children’s ideas and play, and extend children’s learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Educators can extend creativity by using language associated with creative arts. ▶ By using open-ended questions and interacting frequently, educators allow children to think and develop their own thoughts and ideas.
Element 2.1.3	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Many creative activities are active and assist children to be healthy and physical, particularly activities such as dance and creative movement.
Element 3.2.1	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Physical activity, cognitive challenges and creative experiences all have value. ▶ Contributes to the child’s sense of belonging, relationships and learning.
Element 3.2.2	Resources, materials and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ This encourages you to choose and provide open-ended, multiple-use materials and equipment. ▶ Allow children to use materials and equipment in a way that expresses their ideas and interests. ▶ Problem-solving skills require the use of creativity as the child expresses their own ideas in ways that are influenced by their experiences and knowledge.

EYLF/MTOP		
Reference		How it guides your actions
Principle	High expectations and equity	Children are capable beings who can effectively achieve success in complicated pursuits if given the opportunity, and appropriate support and guidance.
Practice	Responsiveness to children and learning through play	Learning environments should support children’s actions in spontaneous and planned ways to enable children’s creative expression to be nurtured, grow and develop.

EYLF/MTOP		
	Reference	How it guides your actions
Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing	Creative activities often involve being active and aid children's understanding of their bodies and maintain their health.
Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners	Children develop dispositions for learning, such as curiosity, cooperation, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity	This relates directly to the child's development and how it links with creative expression.
	Children develop a range of skills and processes, such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating	This focuses on the children's interests, how they lead their learning and whether they are engaged in their activities.
	Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, places, technologies, and natural and processed materials	Children are able to explore ideas and use their imagination and creativity in play and have many ideas for how they might do this.
Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators	Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media	Children need to collaborate to develop roles and scripts, and participate in creative arts.

Encouraging creativity

To provide an effective environment that nurtures creativity, you need to encourage children in the following aspects.

Encouraging curiosity

Curiosity is an emotion related to natural, inquisitive behaviour, such as exploration, investigation and learning. It is about finding things out and experimenting. This is important as it makes the mind active rather than passive, and causes children to seek new possibilities.

Curiosity is a valuable tool for initiating a new activity or experience. It is also useful for encouraging participation and assisting children to develop to their full potential.

You can demonstrate and encourage curiosity by:

- ▶ encouraging active exploration, experimentation and learning; for example, introducing new ideas and experiences via formal, informal, planned and spontaneous experiences
- ▶ showing interest in a variety of topics and ideas
- ▶ keeping an open mind; for example, being ready to see things from other points of view, including from the child's point of view
- ▶ asking open questions about the activity or the learning experience to encourage communication, interest and enthusiasm
- ▶ encouraging problem-solving
- ▶ having a positive attitude so that children see learning as fun.

Encouraging experimentation

Activities that make children think also encourage their learning and extend their concentration. Questions and further activities can be developed out of conversations that arise from activities, and these can be used to capture attention and encourage children to experiment. Your environment can encourage experimentation by:

- ▶ allowing children time to explore
- ▶ including technology in the program; for example, microscopes, telescopes or science kits
- ▶ talking about and visiting museums for art, history and science
- ▶ building on children's interests
- ▶ using unusual materials
- ▶ supporting children to try, make up and create new things.

Encouraging active learning

Your interaction and placement of materials can capture children's attention, and stimulate a response and engagement. When children are involved in activities that are open and stimulate a response, they are led into an experience that may bring out new skills and knowledge, and create reasons to interact with others as part of the learning. To achieve this goal, you need to:

- ▶ use open questions
- ▶ be prepared for children to adapt materials or change the experience
- ▶ support experimentation
- ▶ be prepared to add more materials
- ▶ provide for all possible events; for example, cleaning up mess
- ▶ be curious and interested yourself, and reflect this in your comments and actions.

Encouraging literacy

Literacy includes speaking, reading and writing. In a creative environment, children use self-expression to communicate as they work through self-reflection, or with educators or peers. Literacy is used to research, ask questions, answer questions, sing, imagine, role-play, label work and explain creative pursuits.

Encouraging choice

If you present experiences in an interesting way, you prompt children to use them. By providing a range of creative options and types of experiences, children can choose the type of self-expression that feels meaningful at the time. Spaces should assist children to choose to do something that interests them. There must be sufficient play spaces for each child to have a choice of two or three activities that meet their interests. Children who are given choices tend to show more creativity than children who have all choices made for them.

Ensuring the environment is aesthetically pleasing

Aesthetics relates to the appearance of the environment. Some people like an environment with minimal clutter and others prefer one that feels more lived in. Your challenge is to balance these needs to create environments that the majority of children find stimulating and are attracted to.

Consider the following aspects of your play spaces:

- ▶ Lighting can give spaces warmth and character, and can highlight specific features. Activities should be set up either as close to natural light as possible or under good lighting.

- ▶ Colour creates moods and highlights features. Use colours that are bright to attract the children's attention and encourage an active and stimulating atmosphere; for example, reds are stimulating and exciting, while blues and greens can exert a calming effect.
- ▶ Displays using appropriate pictures, posters, props and children's artwork signal that it is a children's area, and provide children with visually stimulating information. Ensure displays are uncluttered, colourful, interesting, appealing and that they encourage curiosity. Children may use what they see in posters in their play or artwork, so displays should relate to children's interests or an area of learning, and demonstrate consideration for multiculturalism and diversity.
- ▶ Sounds can encourage or inhibit creative and expressive development. They may disrupt concentration or provide a soothing atmosphere, depending on the type of sound and where it is coming from. For example, a noisy environment can disrupt children's concentration, play and creativity. Encourage children to use soft voices and make sounds suitable for the environment.



Ensuring the environment is safe

When children feel safe, they will more readily explore the environment and make use of experiences. Your knowledge of child development and children's individual abilities allow you to identify how the environment needs to be set up to ensure safety, while still allowing for children's spontaneous behaviour, curiosity, independence and growing understanding of danger and its consequences. For example, infants may use non-toxic paint to finger paint, but an adult still needs to supervise to ensure they do not eat the paint. Older children may experiment with small objects such as corks, scissors, buttons and pipe cleaners, but you should not give them to young infants as they would put them in their mouths and may choke.

Finding a balance between safety and healthy risk-taking is a challenging part of your job.

Ensuring the environment is interesting

Creativity is stimulated if the environment provides interesting and challenging visual and physical experiences. You may consider:

- ▶ incorporating multicultural displays and activities to give children the opportunity to develop an understanding of others and learn that being different is valuable
- ▶ varying displays regularly so they do not become stale
- ▶ bringing in unusual objects and discussing what their uses may be
- ▶ regularly providing a range of different materials for children to use, including some they may not have seen before
- ▶ providing interesting activities that encourage children to experiment, such as paint, feathers, sand and water
- ▶ incorporating community events into the program, such as a fundraising event, a cultural day or a seniors day.

Ensuring the environment is challenging

Children's emerging abilities need to be supported or scaffolded. To ensure you provide challenging (but not frustrating) experiences, build on skills using scaffolding. Experiences that scaffold development are naturally challenging, especially if you match them with the way a child learns.

Watch this video about providing creative environments for children.

The following table has information about identifying children's emerging skills.



What the child may say	Cues they may give	What you can do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 'I want to do this.' ▶ 'How do you do this?' ▶ 'Why is it like that?' ▶ 'What do I do?' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Trying something you haven't noticed them do before ▶ Watching others do something 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide modelling and demonstration. ▶ Provide technology and appropriate materials. ▶ Inform others so they can support the child. ▶ Encourage the child. ▶ Work with the family to support learning.

Practice task 11

1. Give a brief description of a play space or specific environment at a service.

2. Describe the aesthetics of this space.

3. Describe how the space is safe.

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4. Describe how this space provides interest and challenges to children.

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5. Describe how this space encourages active learning in children.

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4B Providing experiences to develop children's skills

To successfully plan experiences that enhance and encourage imagination, creativity and self-expression for children, you need to identify their interests and developmental levels. This means considering their gross, fine, social, emotional, cognitive and language development to ensure you offer age-appropriate experiences that also build on their strengths and interests and extend their skills and knowledge. Choosing appropriate activities related to children's age, interests and skills helps build self-esteem, a positive attitude and opportunities to relax and make positive choices.



Consider the following questions when observing children:

- ▶ What is their developmental level?
- ▶ What are their interests and what types of activities do they enjoy?
- ▶ What ideas do the children discuss and which do they attempt?
- ▶ How do children recognise and explore new materials and activities?
- ▶ How do children combine their creative knowledge and imagination to create something new?
- ▶ How do the children react to each experience?

Creating learning stories

Record your findings as written records, samples, photographs, drawings or sketches, or as learning stories. Learning stories are a valuable way to record children's interests and actions. They use a recording method called a narrative. A narrative should be as engaging as possible. It may include a simple story relating to one incident or it may cover days or weeks of a project, activity, development or investigation. Learning stories may be added to by the child, parents and others who participate in the child's life. One of the strengths of learning stories is that you can create each record differently to suit the activity.

Each learning story demonstrates that you are able to:

- ▶ Notice (observe children's learning)
- ▶ Recognise (strive to understand what you notice)
- ▶ Respond (put your understanding to use by acting to provide for the child).

These three principles are necessary if you are to produce valuable records.

You can find many examples of learning stories in the following resources:

- ▶ *Educators' guide to the early years learning framework for Australia* (<http://aspirelr.link/educators-guide-eylf>)
- ▶ *Educators' guide to the framework for school age care in Australia* (<http://aspirelr.link/mtop-educator-guide-pdf>)

Providing a range of experiences

An educator's role is to nurture creativity at every opportunity to allow children to develop their skills and self-expression.

Open-ended experiences are valuable as they allow you to easily modify or extend what you have planned. They also encourage children to decide what they want to do next and how they want to use the materials and props you have provided.

When planning for open-ended, expressive and creative play, there is no right or wrong way for children to do things. However, each experience must meet the requirements of the NQS, learning frameworks, legislation, and the organisation's policies and procedures.

Make sure each experience addresses the following aspects:

- ▶ Children's individual needs must be addressed.
- ▶ Ensure there are no stereotypical or inaccurate materials that project limited ideas of gender roles.
- ▶ Resources and their content should reflect everyday differences and similarities; for example, dolls reflect different races, non-traditional celebrations are held, and books and photos reflect a broad range of people, abilities and lifestyles.
- ▶ Interactions between you and the children must be appropriate and model positive actions.

Planning a group session

You should arrange for children to work on their creative experiences over a period of sessions, days or weeks to enable them to expand on, develop and adapt their work. For each activity you prepare, include a plan of the equipment and material to be used, the time, proposed outcomes and how you might use opportunities to extend children's ideas as they arise.

Planned sessions are valuable to both children and staff as they have a defined structure and there are minimal waiting periods in which the children may lose concentration or become distracted.

Steps for planning a group session:

- 1 Plan a settling activity such as an action song or music to gain the children's attention and increase their interest.
- 2 Introduce the topic to explain what the session is about.

- 3 Use a variety of different techniques and experiences to explore and experiment with the topic and give children the opportunity to express themselves creatively.
- 4 Conclude the topic by revising the information provided in the session and sharing children's results or ideas gained from the session.
- 5 Disperse the children at the end of the session in a safe and orderly manner. Creative ways to do this include noting differences; for example, 'If you have brown hair you can leave the group and choose an activity', 'If you are wearing red you can leave the group and wash your hands for lunch'.

The activities you provide should help nurture children's creativity by developing skills in a number of areas.

Developing skills in music

By having a clear understanding and expectation of children's development, you will be able to achieve many learning objectives from each music experience you provide.

Developmental stage	Music skills and appreciation
Infant	Infants show an interest in music and song, but have a short attention span. They turn their heads towards music and sound, and enjoy chants and rhythms, experimenting with their own voice and banging objects. They connect sound and rhythm by jiggling to music or singing and clapping their hands.
Toddler	Toddlers are developing their speech and understanding of language. They reproduce sounds, sing parts of songs and understand what sounds animals make. They enjoy being sung to.
Preschooler	Preschoolers are becoming independent and develop music preferences. They are able to clap their hands in time to music, join in singing and follow directions in songs. They enjoy group singing, dramatising songs, stories and poems, making sounds to accompany play, singing games, listening to various styles of music, and experimenting with instruments.
School-age child	School-age children have developed clear preferences in their activities and interests. They are able to follow rhythm and beat, learn to play instruments, combine skills such as singing and dancing at the same time, and make their own songs and poems. They enjoy exploring sounds with different materials and instruments.

Provide children with regular opportunities to listen to and explore a range of different types of music, and learn about different musical instruments. Providing a diverse range of music and multicultural and non-biased songs encourages children to express themselves, be creative and further develop language and an appreciation of music.

Consider whether it is appropriate to be indoors or outdoors. For example, in some instances, the children may require plenty of room and the opportunity to make sounds without interfering with others. An outdoor environment is also appropriate when matching music with nature.

When planning a music activity, identify the desired outcome or objective; for example, to encourage children to be able to:

- ▶ use songs, chants and rhymes to express feelings, thoughts and moods
- ▶ develop attentive listening skills
- ▶ understand and use tone and pitch, fast and slow, high and low sounds
- ▶ memorise the words and rhythm of a tune
- ▶ develop respect for others, their cultures, their music style choices, and their likes and dislikes
- ▶ use their imaginations and ideas to make up their own music, songs, rhymes and chants
- ▶ practise and enjoy making music or singing and gaining confidence in their skills.

Activities to develop skills in music and nurture creativity

Listen to each child's musical preferences and discuss these in a group.

Introduce children to a range of instruments; for example:

- ▶ percussion: drums, blocks (rhythm/tone blocks), rattles, cymbals, etc.
- ▶ string: violin, guitar, cello, etc.
- ▶ brass: trumpet, horn, trombone, etc.
- ▶ woodwind: clarinet, flute, recorder, whistle, didgeridoo, etc.
- ▶ electronic instruments: electric guitars, synthesisers, electric keyboards, etc.

Incorporate instruments into daily activities such as:

- ▶ a sound to signal a change of activity
- ▶ in imaginary or dramatic play
- ▶ when reading a story.

Provide cultural, commercial and homemade instruments for children to practise new skills, learn the sounds of the different instruments and make their own sounds. When first introducing instruments to children, demonstrate any special techniques in caring for and playing the instrument.

Place a basket of instruments on the floor or spread them out on an accessible shelf or ledge. Always allow time for children to explore and get to know the different instruments. When handling the instruments, model respect and take care of them. Children need to be aware that some musical instruments can easily be broken and sometimes cannot be replaced.

Use different types of music with other activities to prompt ideas and create a mood; for example, Indigenous Australian music, classical, rock and roll, country, folk, pop, hip hop and music from other cultures.

Mama Lisa's World (<http://aspirelr.link/mamalisa-music>) is a website that includes children's songs and nursery rhymes. This site provides music and songs from a variety of countries, with words in English and the originating country and recordings to allow you to learn the tune.

Putumayo World Music (<http://aspirelr.link/putumayo-music>) has various CDs available reflecting diverse genres and cultures.

Make musical instruments; for example:

- ▶ Drums: Use formula tins with lids or material across the opening of the tin.
- ▶ Shakers: Place uncooked rice inside plastic bottles.
- ▶ Tambourines: String two bottle tops with holes together back-to-back and attach around a paper plate. Older children can help put these together and decorate.
- ▶ Rhythm sticks: Use bamboo rods or chopsticks.
- ▶ Cymbals and bells: Attach elastic or string to jar lids.
- ▶ Kazoos and horns: Use cardboard/plastic cylinders with paper or material covering the end only stuck partly to the cylinder (so when blown in through one end the paper or material vibrates).

You can also use:

- ▶ lids, spoons and boxes for banging
- ▶ cardboard cylinders to blow into
- ▶ glass jars containing various amounts of water to tap and hear the different pitches
- ▶ foil cups, plastic containers and metal rods (educator supervision required) for musical mobiles.

Include music during daily routines, such as washing and drying hands, packing up, brushing hair and teeth, and dressing.

Ask families to represent their different cultures by coming to talk to children, sing songs, dance and wear their traditional dress.

Example

Planned music experience

Emma, an educator, observes Harrison and Esha sitting in the sandpit outdoors. Harrison is playing with two fish toys. Esha takes one of the fish from Harrison. Harrison and Esha push the fish into the sand and push them along. Emma sings a rhyme about fish, and both Harrison and Esha look up at her. The two toddlers swish their fish in the sand with the rhyme. Later, Emma sees Harrison and Esha watching the fish in the fish tank.

These observations prompt Emma to plan the following experiences for her group.

Music activity: Fish music and movement session (20 minutes)

Child's or group identification: Group 2 (five children)

Age: Three years

Outcomes based on NQS/EYLF/MTOP

EYLF Outcome 5: Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.

Development

- ▶ Language: introduction to some repetitive songs
- ▶ Physical: promote exploration of movement
- ▶ Social: provide social interaction and participation in a small group

Materials required:

- ▶ 10 wrist bands with bells
- ▶ Large wall mirror
- ▶ Five jellyfish skirts
- ▶ CD player and ocean music
- ▶ Words to songs *The waves move*, *Three jellyfish* and *Five jellyfish are swimming in the water*

Activities:

- ▶ Talk to the toddlers briefly about where the jellyfish went in the song.
- ▶ Put skirts and bells on to prepare for them to be little jellyfish in the ocean. Discuss how their costumes make them look like fish with swishy tails.
- ▶ Sing *Three jellyfish* using hand actions.
- ▶ Play background ocean music while singing *The waves move* and have the children move around the space like fish.
- ▶ Sing *Five jellyfish are swimming in the water*.

Strategies to enrich music potential during the experience:

- ▶ Short session to match concentration level
- ▶ Small group to ensure adequate space
- ▶ Enough adult support to ensure minimal waiting times
- ▶ Demonstrate movements and actions
- ▶ Sing clearly and slowly to enable the children to hear and participate at their pace

Developing skills in movement

Movement is one of the first forms of communication children demonstrate and a natural part of development. Design activities to give children opportunities to develop an understanding of their bodies and the world around them.

Infants are still learning about the boundaries of their bodies, their size in their environment and their ability to move and then stop their bodies effectively. This is called spatial awareness. Once this skill is developed, children know the way their bodies move and fit in spaces so they can be more creative in their movements.

Through movement children can:

- ▶ develop their physical skills and abilities through experiences, encouragement, environment and practice (the most critical time for children to develop these skills is between the ages of two and seven)
- ▶ learn about their bodies in a joyful way
- ▶ channel their energy and feelings through their body actions
- ▶ develop stability, locomotion, and problem-solving, cognitive and manipulative skills
- ▶ get to know themselves and see connections with the rest of the world.

Developmental stages of movement

Be aware of children's developmental stages so you can plan activities that not only match their level, but also extend their skills.

Developmental stage	Movement skills
Infant	Infants are developing their gross motor skills. They can crawl, follow a moving object, reach out for objects using their hands, mouth and eyes in coordination, imitate hand gestures such as waving goodbye, and explore their own bodies and surroundings. They enjoy shaking, pounding and banging objects; walking or dancing while holding an adult's hands or being held; and imitating actions such as peek-a-boo.
Toddler	Toddlers are full of energy, enthusiasm and curiosity. They are improving their motor skills, which allows them to freely explore their environment. They show some spatial awareness and can identify body parts; walk around obstacles; run, squat and climb; and throw a large ball underarm while maintaining balance. They enjoy pushing and pulling toys, participating in simple action songs, and moving to music.
Preschooler	Preschoolers are full of energy, curiosity and creativity. Motor skills are being perfected. They interact in group situations and play cooperatively. They are able to use a wide range of gross motor skills; run, start and stop with ease; and use imaginative and elaborate play ideas. They enjoy interactive games; making up their own songs and dances; role-play and imitation; and creating and sharing their ideas with others.
School-age child	School-age children are more in control of themselves physically and are becoming more self-confident. They are able to control fine and gross motor movements; coordinate themselves physically (for example, kicking a ball and riding a bike); and understand the concept of space and time. They enjoy vigorous physical activity, challenging activities, team games and sports, dramatic play, making up their own games, activities and rules, and sharing their ideas with others.

Providing activities to develop skills in movement

Creative movement provides children with opportunities for non-competitive, success-oriented and creative experiences. Activities should encourage all children to participate, as all children can benefit from these types of experiences, including children with additional needs, such as language, sensory, developmental or physical needs.

There are many ways to include movement in your program. The following table includes some suggestions for activities to develop skills in movement and nurture creativity.

<p>Physical activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Explore fast and slow, high and low body movements ▶ Balance and jump ▶ Follow particular movement directions ▶ Move freely ▶ Act out and shape their bodies like objects ▶ Complete obstacle courses ▶ Dance ▶ Learn new games
<p>Sensory exploration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop visual and body perception, and spatial awareness ▶ Incorporate props such as scarves, bells, streamers and colours ▶ Respond with movement to the aspects of music; for example, tempo and rhythm ▶ Concentrate on the shapes their bodies make and how this feels ▶ Link music to movements of the body ▶ Identify the different movements inspired by the music of various cultures
<p>Problem-solving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Participate fully in an open-ended movement experience ▶ Participate in a challenging movement experience ▶ Identify ways to complete a task or action, particularly if the expectation is new or the action requires a new skill ▶ Use props, space, sounds or music in a variety of ways ▶ Demonstrate body awareness and spatial relations ▶ Work together to complete movement tasks
<p>Imagination and creativity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Choose a range of props and songs ▶ Participate in open-ended movement experiences ▶ Express ideas, feelings, culture and body image ▶ Dance to a range of music genres ▶ Role-play using movement ▶ Interpret animals or objects
<p>Social and emotional skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Reflect cultural heritage ▶ Participate in group games ▶ Participate in dancing experiences where there is turn-taking and cooperation ▶ Express ideas and feelings ▶ Teach others movements or actions ▶ Watch or discuss the movements of others ▶ Develop skills that improve body awareness and positive body image ▶ Keep fit, healthy and flexible

Planned movement activity**Movement activity: Human bingo (20 minutes)**

Child's or group identification: Red Group

Age: Five years

Outcome based on NQS/EYLF/MTOP:

MTOP Outcome 1: Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

Development:

- ▶ Creative – expressing the movements that each music genre encourages
- ▶ Social and emotional – identifying physical similarities and differences, interacting with different children and encouraging new relationships
- ▶ Language – considering new words that describe personal characteristics
- ▶ Cognitive – matching self to others, memory and understanding how the game is played
- ▶ Physical – using bodies to move to music

Materials required:

- ▶ Lots of open space
- ▶ CD player
- ▶ Collection of music from different genres

Activity:

Settling: I will use my usual call to group time by playing the tambourine until everyone is seated. Once the children are on the mat, we will sign the words 'hello' and 'welcome' to each other in Auslan as we learnt in another group time.

Introduction:

We will play a game of matching to me, where I will say, 'Who has the same hair colour as me?' and add various features until everyone has matched.

Content:

Children dance to music. I will ask children to move to the music using their ideas of how the music makes them feel. When the music stops I will call out a personal characteristic, starting with, 'Make a group that includes everyone who comes to kinder' so that they begin in a large group. Between short music and movement activity, I will ask things such as 'Find others who have similar hair/eye colour/clothing/height' so that I can get a good range of groupings.

If children have difficulty choosing movements to the music being played, I will encourage them to follow another child or give some suggestions.

Conclusion: Ask about the similarities and differences – Who liked being different to everyone else? Who thought they were very similar to another child?

Dispersal: Choose children who can identify a similarity or difference not yet identified and disperse the group based on each of these ideas. If the group reduces to three children, I will choose an idea that they all fit with, so that no one child is left alone on the mat.

Strategies used to foster creativity during the experience:

- ▶ Ensure availability of space and time for children to participate fully.
- ▶ Ensure that I choose personal characteristics that represent all children where possible.
- ▶ Celebrate those who are different from others, including a song of celebration if children are left out of groups or if all children are included, simply singing, 'You are special, different from the others' and maybe getting the child to dance around the room celebrating their differences.
- ▶ Make comments about children who were different and now are the same; for example, 'Jo, you were different from all the children last time and now you are the same as Kim and Lesley.'
- ▶ Play music for periods long enough for children to settle into a dance.

Developing skills in construction

Construction combines the use of a number of skills and concepts as children build and create. Children construct objects based on items they notice around them, items they imagine and items they invent as they proceed. The art of designing and constructing buildings is called architecture.

Be aware of children's developmental stages so you can plan activities that match their level and extend their skills. Construction stages are influenced by the child's experience. A child who has never worked with construction materials will have developing skills as they have not learnt about how balance, size and structure all work together.

Children's developmental stages in relation to construction are outlined in the following table.

Developmental stage	Construction skills
Infant	Infants are developing their gross motor skills and exploring the properties of materials. They are able to carry items around, feel them and experiment. They enjoy seeing if things fit together, fit in other objects, knocking over towers and bashing blocks together.
Toddler	Toddlers are aware of the properties of materials and start to become more adventurous in their creative ideas. They are able to build rows horizontally and vertically. They enjoy building roads and towers, and later building fences. They start to include imaginative play in their construction.
Preschooler	Preschoolers are creative and use their imagination during building. They are able to create representational buildings. They enjoy naming their constructions and using them with a function. They make houses and stations, train tracks and farms, and use these constructions in play. They also use construction items such as cars, mobile phones and trains.
Late preschooler/ school-age child	Children of this age are able to plan ahead. They are able to decide what they are building before they start and can reproduce ideas and repeat their constructions. They can extend on their ideas later, developing them indefinitely. They enjoy working on projects and using them dramatically. They like to develop works in progress and create elaborate stories that involve their constructions.

Learning through construction

Construction combines creative self-expression with the skills of problem-solving and investigating as children explore their creations. Children discover how things work and how to use tools. They also discover science and mathematics aspects as they work out:

- ▶ size and shape
- ▶ numbers and measurements, such as length, area, mass, density and weight
- ▶ balance
- ▶ spatial awareness
- ▶ position
- ▶ direction
- ▶ patterns
- ▶ sorting
- ▶ fractions.



You can contribute to children's creative construction by providing materials and space (both indoors and outdoors) and supporting ideas that children are implementing or helping them to gain new ideas. You can extend their understanding by talking about the science and mathematical concepts.

Materials may include:

- ▶ small wooden blocks
- ▶ large hollow wooden blocks
- ▶ cardboard boxes/egg cartons
- ▶ Mega Bloks/LEGO/DUPLO
- ▶ Mobilo
- ▶ magnets
- ▶ connector straws
- ▶ gears
- ▶ sand.

Providing activities to develop skills in construction

Construction play develops in stages based on a child's experiences with materials.

There are six stages of block play:

Tote and carry: The blocks are carried around, felt and experimented with.

Building starts: Blocks are placed in rows horizontally or vertically.

Bridging: Children learn to make a bridge through trial and error.

Enclosures: Blocks are placed to make enclosed spaces like fences, and children learn inside and outside as a spatial concept.

Representational building: Block construction is used in dramatic play. Older children name their structures in relation to its function. Before this time, the name of the construction and the function may not necessarily link.

Sociodrama building: The buildings are used in dramatic play, are decided on before they are built and may be reproduced. Children may want to extend on their construction or leave it standing for later play.

Blocks can be used to enhance creativity by:

- ▶ presenting them in the block corner on shelves and set up on the floor
- ▶ placing small blocks on tables
- ▶ using them to make props for other activities
- ▶ adding props such as cars and traffic lights, dolls and animals, pieces of cloth and material
- ▶ providing them indoors and outdoors.

Woodworking

Children may also participate in woodworking activities. Woodwork requires close supervision as children learn to respect and use tools in a safe manner. Woodwork allows children to construct and make their ideas with the materials provided.

Young children may use 'tap tap' sets or foam instead of wood. All children require support to develop skills to use tools and hold materials safely. Consider the following:

- ▶ What type of wood? Pine is a soft wood; other woods may be difficult to saw or hammer into.
- ▶ What shapes of wood? Different shapes and sizes allow for a variety of ideas.
- ▶ Which tools? Do the tools suit the age group? Nails, hammers, files, saws, sandpaper and non-toxic glue all require consideration as to whether they are appropriate for the children to use and, if so, which sizes or types will be best suited.
- ▶ What other materials can be used? Wood, cloth, icy-pole sticks, and plastic lids are all options.
- ▶ Is the equipment at the correct level for children? Is the workbench steady? Remember that safety is crucial.

Example

Planning a construction experience

Dan observes Billy working in the block area for 35 minutes building with large hollow blocks. Billy constructs a tower office, a series of fences and a tunnel with a road going through it. He shows an interest in construction and has strengths in using blocks. Dan wants to extend this further and give Billy the opportunity to use his skills in other types of construction with different materials.

Construction activity: Collage pasting with cardboard boxes

Child's or group identification: Billy

Age: Four years and three months

Outcome based on NQS/EYLF/MTOP:

EYLF Outcome 4: Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another.

Development:

- ▶ Creative – having an idea and creating it
- ▶ Physical – manipulating the materials
- ▶ Emotional – experiencing success in creating an idea of his own
- ▶ Cognitive – solving problems and working out how to create his ideas

Materials required:

- ▶ Small table with one chair
- ▶ One paste pot, brush and smock
- ▶ Scissors
- ▶ Boxes of various sizes in a laundry basket
- ▶ Baskets holding tissue paper and crayons

Strategies used to foster creativity during the experience:

- ▶ Ensure availability of props and set up the experience ensuring there are plenty of different box sizes and shapes.
- ▶ Present these in an attractive manner.
- ▶ Ensure Billy has the opportunity to work uninterrupted and knows that he can stop his work and return to it at a later time – a shelf is available for work to be stored.
- ▶ Discuss techniques Billy uses, but don't interrupt concentration. Replenish used collage materials and reset for the next child to participate.

Developing skills in visual arts

Art is influenced by the materials you provide and the way you provide them. It is an appropriate and valuable medium for nurturing creativity and original ideas, as well as developing children's confidence and self-esteem.

Be aware of children's developmental stages so you can plan activities that match their level and extend their skills.

Drawing generally develops in three major stages. Each child progresses through these stages 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; this in turn encourages the children to progress smoothly through each of the stages.

Providing activities to develop skills in visual arts

There are many activities involving visual arts. For most art activities, you will need to supply art smocks to protect children's clothing and a bucket of warm soapy water and wash cloths so they can clean up when they finish.

Here are several suggestions using different materials and equipment.



Brush painting

Children enjoy painting with brushes on paper at a table, on the floor, at an easel, indoors and outdoors. Always ensure you have a supply of large blank paper. The paper should be set at the children's eye level so they can reach the entire sheet and make full use of the experience. Each colour of paint should be kept in its own pot with its own paintbrush. Depending on the age of the children, you can use different size brushes for each pot. Encourage children to place the brushes back in the correct pot. Provide spare pots or trays for mixing paint. If setting up outdoors, ensure you are in a shady area out of the wind to prevent the paper blowing and sticking to itself.



Finger painting

Finger painting is a calming activity where children can explore colour, texture, shapes and lines. For younger children and infants, single-coloured finger paint allows the child to focus on manipulation and how they choose to discover the paint. Older children enjoy adding a variety of textures such as wood shavings, glitter or sand to the paint to further extend the experience.

Finger painting can be done on large paper, tables or trays. If paper is used, it needs to be large enough so that children are not restricted in their movements. You can finger paint with water-based paint, sand and water or cornflour mix.

The final work can be used to make cards or wrapping paper, although the creative process of finger painting should be the focus.



Printing

Objects or cut-out shapes can be used to print on paper or other types of materials using:

- ▶ natural objects such as leaves, rocks and pebbles
- ▶ sponges
- ▶ clay or dough
- ▶ hands and feet
- ▶ various recycled and found objects, such as lids, corks and cotton spoons.

You or your service may have a philosophy and policy regarding the use of food in play or creative activities, so be sure to consider this before using potatoes or other food-printing ideas.



Collage

Collage refers to pasting and gluing. Using various sized materials allows children to explore a range of ideas and encourages their manipulative skills by assisting them to grasp thin, thick, small and large pieces of materials such as paper, cloth and corks, and to use a variety of joining materials.

Collages can be set up at the table, on the floor, indoors or outdoors. To avoid the area looking messy and disorganised, set it up in an inviting manner. Provide materials in bowls, containers or collage trays that keep each material separate. This enables children to think about what they want to use or make without sorting through a mess of pieces. Try not to provide an overwhelming number of collage materials, but select enough for the stage of development and previous experience. Ensure there are sufficient paste pots or sticking implements to allow each child to work at their own pace without waiting for others as waiting dulls the creative ideas of the child and makes the experience less valuable.

There are numerous types of materials that can be used in collage, all with a variety of colours, textures, shapes, purposes and sizes. These include:

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| ▶ corks | ▶ yoghurt containers | ▶ magazine cuttings |
| ▶ bottle tops | ▶ cotton reels | ▶ sequins |
| ▶ straws | ▶ netting | ▶ buttons |
| ▶ cloth | ▶ old birthday cards | ▶ pipe cleaners |
| ▶ confetti | ▶ egg cartons | ▶ wood shavings |
| ▶ wool | ▶ ribbons | ▶ plastic tubing. |
| ▶ icy-pole sticks | ▶ stickers | |



Drawing

Drawing encourages children's fine motor skill development and allows them to express their feelings, ideas and understanding of the world. Drawing is suitable for all ages, but always consider the child's developmental stage when planning and selecting the forms of drawing tools to use. Offer blank sheets of paper to allow them to draw freely. Stencils and outlined pictures to colour in take away the freedom of drawing and encourage only fine motor skill control, cognitive copying and decision-making. These types of drawing experiences should be limited and offered as a choice.

By introducing one type of tool or equipment at a time, children will thoroughly explore it. You may want to start with crayons, then black pencils, coloured pencils, textas and chalk. Once children have mastered the use of each drawing tool, you can then offer a variety together. Other tools include charcoal, oil pastels, whiteboard markers, pens and ink.

The size of pencils and crayons you provide depends on the age of the children you are planning for. Consider the fine motor skills of the children and the grasp that they use. For example, a child with a gross grasp needs a thick drawing implement to hold well in their palm, whereas a child with a pencil grip is able to manipulate finer tools.

Large sheets of paper suit younger children as they use large arm movements and this allows them to move more freely. Smaller sized paper can be used for older children as they have more control of their gross and fine motor skills. You may extend the experience by drawing on other surfaces such as cardboard, coloured paper or wallpaper. Ask the children what they would like to draw on or with, and always ensure each child has access to the materials they need.



Weaving and sewing

Weaving and sewing are usually introduced to children who have developed some fine motor skill control to hold and use needles. They also need to be able to understand the concept of under and over.

Weaving involves threading materials together to make patterns; materials include wool, paper, cotton, fabric, ribbon, cardboard, pipe cleaners, straws and hessian.

Sewing includes a variety of forms where materials are joined together.

Threading is a related activity children can participate in. Materials may include material pieces, wool, cotton, yarn, plastic string, macaroni, beads and hessian bags. Tools may include blunt, ballpoint or thick plastic needles.



Moulding and modelling

Moulding and modelling different materials allows children to experiment with shape, explore textures and create objects using their imagination and manipulation. Choose moulding materials that are appropriate for the children's ages and the outcome you hope to achieve. Materials may include play dough, clay, plasticine, wet sand, paper, papier-mâché and modelling wire. To enhance the experience at specific age levels, you may add icy-pole sticks, glass beads, pebbles, water, dried lentils or beans, straw or leaves. Tools to assist children may include rolling pins, clay modelling tools, mini garden tools, blunt knives and scissors.

The most popular forms of moulding and modelling are play dough and clay, as they are versatile and able to provide an aesthetic experience for children. Together with sand and water, these materials allow children to manipulate, poke, prod and pound, as they create whatever they like, and simply squash it and start again or dry it for a permanent finish. Moulding and modelling can be used to create objects and shapes for a calming and soothing sensation, or can be used for pounding and stretching as a way of releasing feelings of stress and frustration.

Because of the likely mess, limit the number of children at the activity at any one time. Set up moulding and modelling materials on clean tables or placemats directly in front of each chair or space. To ensure children get the most out of the experience, provide each child with at least two handfuls of material. Give children the opportunity to sit or stand at the activity so they can use different techniques; for example, if they are pounding, children may need to stand in order to use the appropriate level of force.

Supporting creativity

Always be aware of how you set up an experience so that children receive creative play choices. It is a common mistake for educators to provide opportunities that have the potential to be creative, but present them in ways that change their value.

Here are some examples of how to support creativity during different activities.

Common error	How to support creativity
Colouring in within prescribed lines develops fine motor skills and colour identification.	To make colouring a more creative experience, provide blank paper and colouring materials instead.
Providing models of work for children to copy, such as a rabbit mask from a paper bag, develops cognitive and fine motor skills, but restricts creativity.	Provide a range of materials without a model, or provide the model but include additional materials for children to add to it. Encourage children to add to or change the model rather than copy it.
Providing play dough, rolling pins and cutters for an activity develops fine motor skills and social skills when discussing actions and pretend play.	To encourage creativity, provide dough without props.

Follow these tips to support children and nurture their creativity in visual art activities:

- ▶ Provide a range of natural and manufactured material for children to use.
- ▶ Ask the children open-ended questions about their work and the process they used.
- ▶ Have children discuss each other's artwork.
- ▶ Help children display their art.
- ▶ Allow children to select their own materials.

Developing skills in dramatic play

Dramatic play involves imaginary situations and organised roles and rules. During dramatic play, children role-play stories, and act out situations and roles such as shopkeepers, hairdressers and parents. They use dramatic play to understand the world they live in, make sense of things that have happened in their lives and act out feelings, such as fear, shyness, frustration and anger. Dramatic play allows the child to become another person, to see what it is like to act like them, think like them and express themselves in different ways.

Dramatic play is initiated in the associative social play stage, where children take on roles alongside others, but comes to a peak when they reach the cooperative play stage, in which children are able to share ideas and solve problems together. At this point they take on the roles of leaders or followers, and give roles to each other in their play. Plots will be discussed and played out, and children work together, meaning the play lasts longer.

Providing activities to develop skills in dramatic play

Activities may be planned or may develop spontaneously. Make sure there are sufficient props and dress-up clothes that are accessible, safe and easy to use.

Experiences may include:

- ▶ enacting stories
- ▶ presenting day-to-day situations
- ▶ acting out jobs
- ▶ inventing situations to demonstrate emotions
- ▶ dramatising current events
- ▶ puppetry.

As you watch children play and listen to their ideas, you may find that opportunities arise where you are able to provide support and extension to their play. When you provide extensions to play, children remain engaged for longer periods and can find a broader range of options for their play. It may be as simple as adding props to a play space, suggesting a larger or smaller place for their play or adding a new idea about their topic of play.

Planned dramatic play experience

Isolde is 18 months old. She has been observed a number of times watching a group of three-year-olds in imaginary play: playing with dolls, and feeding, bathing, changing them and putting them to bed. Isolde is holding a doll and looking at it. She has not shown any imitative play.

Dramatic play activity: Feeding dolls

Child's or group identification: Isolde

Age: 18 months

Outcome based on NQS/EYLF/MTOP:

EYLF Outcome 4: Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity

Development:

- ▶ Creative – imitating real life with an imaginative situation
- ▶ Physical – using a spoon correctly
- ▶ Emotional – expressing feelings through a make-believe story
- ▶ Cognitive - working out how to feed the doll by following actions

Materials:

- ▶ Dressed doll
- ▶ Two spoons
- ▶ Bowl
- ▶ Chair and table

Activity:

- ▶ Doll dressed and sitting on a chair in the playroom.
- ▶ I will ask Isolde to come and help me feed the doll.
- ▶ I will call the doll Kylie, which is her younger sister's name.
- ▶ I will have two spoons, so that we can both imitate feeding the doll.
- ▶ Ensure considerations are made to reflect diversity and/or the child's family culture:
 - Isolde eats with a spoon.
 - Isolde has a younger sister at home who is fed with a spoon by her mum.
 - Use Isolde's sister's name – Kylie.

Practice task 12

1. Consider a music experience that has been provided to children in a service.
Answer the following questions.

a. Briefly describe the music experience.

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b. Explain how it nurtured creativity in the children and helped them develop music skills.

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c. Provide suggestions for how you would enhance the experience and why you would do this.

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2. Prepare **two** plans for an activity for at least three children in a specific age group.
The activities may be in relation to any two of the following creative experiences:

- ▶ music
- ▶ construction
- ▶ visual arts
- ▶ dramatic arts.

Include the following in each plan:

- ▶ brief description of the activity
- ▶ the age group the activity is suitable for
- ▶ how the activity nurtures creativity and develops skills
- ▶ the desired outcome
- ▶ whether the activity is suitable for indoors or outdoors
- ▶ a list of the materials and equipment you would need.

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Summary

- ▶ Creative and aesthetically pleasing experiences are an essential part of your curriculum. They should be offered throughout the whole day and be available both indoors and outdoors.
- ▶ Environments suited to self-expression are those that are adaptable and responsive to the actions and ideas that are occurring at the time. The NQS and EYLF/MTOP demonstrate this flexibility by guiding you to develop your program based on the direction the children take.
- ▶ Environments that are aesthetically pleasing, safe, interesting and challenging encourage curiosity, experimentation, active learning, literacy and choice.
- ▶ Your role is to nurture creativity at every opportunity to allow children to develop their skills and self-expression. This includes observing, encouraging, providing opportunities and extending the interests and abilities of all children.
- ▶ To successfully plan an experience that enhances and encourages imagination, creativity and self-expression in children, you need to observe children's interests and developmental levels.
- ▶ Open-ended experiences are valuable as they allow you to easily modify or extend what you originally planned. They also encourage children to decide what they want to do next and how they want to use the materials and props you have provided.
- ▶ Provide a range of opportunities and the appropriate materials, equipment, environment and space to develop children's skills in:
 - music
 - movement
 - construction
 - visual art
 - dramatic play.

Learning checkpoint 4

Providing experiences to develop children's skills and creativity

Part A

1. Give an example of how you can use curiosity to encourage creativity in an experience.

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2. Explain why educators need to understand the developmental level of the children they are planning activities for.

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3. Describe **four** ways that creativity can be nurtured in children through planned activities.

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Topic 5

In this topic you will learn about:

- 5A Using a range of methods to evaluate children's learning**

- 5B Reflecting on evaluations and making changes to stimulate creativity**

Evaluating experiences

An essential part of your role is to observe children doing an activity to notice how they are reacting. This will help you identify whether they find the experience meaningful, how well the activity is meeting their needs and how the experience may be extended in the future.

These actions form part of an evaluation process: an ongoing cycle of assessment for learning.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and both national learning frameworks.

National Quality Standard		
✓	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	
Early Years Learning Framework	My Time, Our Place	
Principles		
✓	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	
✓	Partnerships	
✓	High expectations and equity	
	Respect for diversity	
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice	
Practice		
✓	Holistic approaches	Holistic approaches
	Responsiveness to children	Collaboration with children
	Learning through play	Learning through play
	Intentional teaching	Intentionality
	Learning environments	Environments
	Cultural competence	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions	Continuity and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning	Evaluation for wellbeing and learning
Outcomes		
	Children have a strong sense of identity	
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world	
	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing	
	Children are confident and involved learners	
	Children are effective communicators	

5A Using a range of methods to evaluate children’s learning

Evaluating the experiences you provide is part of your commitment to ongoing learning and reflective practice. The information gained from evaluation forms part of the assessment process that must be undertaken to comply with Regulation 74 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations, which requires documenting child assessments or evaluations for delivery of the educational program.



Element 1.3.1 of the NQS states: ‘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’. This reminds you that you can use evaluation to:

- ▶ reflect on the success of the program
- ▶ record information about how each child progresses toward specific outcomes
- ▶ encourage families to communicate how they feel the program is operating and how successful it is for their child
- ▶ ensure you are including each child
- ▶ lead you toward curriculum decision-making that extends children’s learning.

There are two methods of evaluation: formative and summative. Use both of these methods to ensure your plans are reflective, responsive and challenging.

Formative evaluation

Formative evaluation is the result of information collected while a child is participating in an experience. Formative evaluation considers what the child is doing and how they are handling an activity. This information helps you to identify ways you can support the child in follow-up activities.

Watch this video about gathering information about a child.

The following table outlines some documentation collection methods to develop formative assessments.



Documentation method	Details
Anecdotal records	These are brief narratives describing an incident or behaviour that is important. They should be written in a factual, objective manner and can be used to see how well a certain task can be performed, such as painting.
Running records	Everything that occurs to a child over a specific period of time is written down. This includes all behaviours.

Documentation method	Details
Jottings and incidental records	<p>These include noting children’s questions, brief transcripts of their conversations or comments, quick details of a play situation, questions, ideas and knowledge.</p> <p>They may also include information provided to you by another person such as the child’s parents.</p>
Learning stories	<p>These tell a story of what learning you noticed.</p> <p>The child’s own words can be used to make the record more meaningful.</p> <p>Learning stories may be subjective, so other methods must also be used.</p>
Photos and recordings	<p>You can capture children’s learning effectively with digital photography.</p> <p>Photos need to be linked to anecdotal records or learning stories to provide the background and information about the learning. The child’s own words can be used to enhance the record.</p> <p>Sometimes a series of photos showing a developing skill, idea or project is more useful evidence of learning than a single photo.</p>
Samples of work	<p>Collect a sample of the child’s writing, drawing, painting, sculpture or constructions. If children prefer to take their work home, photos can be taken for your collection.</p> <p>Samples of work need annotations about the context and the important factors in the experience, such as how the work was completed, challenges the children experienced, how they negotiated or solved problems, and how the work demonstrates their interests and knowledge.</p> <p>The child’s own words can be used to make the record more meaningful.</p>
Checklists	<p>Record behaviours, actions, skills, processes and attitudes.</p> <p>Actions and interactions can be checked off against a predetermined list that records the presence, attainment or absence of these.</p>
Forms	<p>At enrolment, families may complete a ‘Getting to know you’ form.</p> <p>Brief, general questions about children’s interests and friendships encourage families to share their unique knowledge.</p>
Sociograms	<p>Sociograms depict who children interact with, how often and in what ways.</p>

Evaluating the effectiveness of an experience

When evaluating the effectiveness of an experience, look at whether the objectives you set were achieved, whether the children enjoyed the experience and whether the level of participation was what you predicted. Note any factors that may have influenced the effectiveness of the experience, such as the children's needs, the sequence of activities, the resources or materials, the amount of time given to the activity or the space available.



Watch this video about recording information about children.

Consider the following questions when recording information:

Was the experience aimed at the children's interests? For example, a dance session with children in jellyfish costumes may be successful because of the children's interest in sea life and dance. However, the same experience with a different group of children with no interest in sea life may not have the same result and there will be limited learning.

Was the experience age-appropriate? Experiences may not work because they are inappropriate, too long or too short, or because the activity may be too advanced for a child's development. Observe whether the children's interest and participation may be extended slightly beyond the experience. Never wait for the children to become bored before increasing the challenge.

What worked and what didn't work? Identify what you need to focus on in the future; for example, did the activity build on a child's interests and challenge their creativity, or was the experience too difficult, not interesting enough or lacking adequate resources?

Who did and did not fully participate? Identify reasons for non-participation and work towards building the child's confidence and/or increasing the child's interest in participating in group sessions.

Did any spontaneous learning occur? Why/why not? How can you build on this in the future?

Were any changes made to the planned activity? If so, why?

Was the experience effective and enjoyable for the children?

What did other people think? Parents, supervisors, other educators and people important to the child or program may have alternative opinions and viewpoints. Always try to gain other people's perspectives so you can develop a greater understanding and learn from how other people see things.

Summative evaluation

Summative evaluation occurs when you look back at a range of formative evaluations to gain a comprehensive view of the child. Summative evaluation is used to identify how a child is working toward EYLF or MTOP outcomes. It is about summing up what is happening.

Summative evaluation gathers information from a range of sources and uses this to reflect on the child's strengths, interests, skills, abilities and capacity for self-expression. This information can be shared with others, such as colleagues, parents and other people who care for the child.

While formative evaluations provide snippets of information about a child, summative evaluation enables you to gain an overall picture of a child's self-expression, interests, knowledge and success in working toward the EYLF/MTOP outcomes.

Summative evaluation should occur at regular intervals so that you have a complete understanding of each child.

Example
Using formative evaluation to conduct a summative assessment

Record	Formative evaluation
<p>Learning story: Ben, you worked at your box construction for more than 15 minutes, using samples of all the materials available. You then came to me and said you wanted to make a train, so we went to the storeroom where you chose bottle tops to use as wheels and some corks for steam engine funnels. You carefully put them together using tape and staples. You created a train that you drove across the window sills. You made sounds like a train softly, so only I could hear. When it was time to pack up, you put the train into your locker, carefully covering it with your coat so it was safe.</p>	<p>Ben enjoys construction, and is able to invent and carry out his own ideas selecting the materials he needs. He is also able to care for his work.</p>
<p>Jotting notes: During group time, Ben chose to move like a train and whistled through the group, tooting and circling his arms.</p>	<p>Ben is showing an interest in trains.</p>
<p>Anecdotal: Ben is working at the paint easel. He uses blue and tells me it is Thomas the Tank Engine. He asks if he can have some white as he wants to make smoke coming out of the funnel. Ben creates a recognisable train with smoke. I ask why the train has smoke and Ben says that it just does.</p>	<p>Ben shows interest in trains and knows the Thomas the Tank Engine character. Ben knows the train has smoke, but does not know why.</p>
<p>Summative evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ben has a high level of self-expression as he is able to create his own ideas using different art media. (Outcome 5: Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media) ▶ Ben participates with others in creative movement. (Outcome 1: Children feel safe, secure, and supported; Outcome 2: Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation) ▶ Ben did not know why the train had smoke. (Outcome 4: Children develop a range of skills and processes, such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating) 	

Practice task 13

Observe a child during an activity and make formative evaluation notes, then provide a summative evaluation. You can use the following table or similar.

Record	Formative evaluation
Learning story:	
Jotting notes:	
Anecdotal:	
Summative evaluation:	

5B Reflecting on evaluations and making changes to stimulate creativity

Use the information from your evaluations to gather ideas to use in future planning. This may include:

- ▶ expanding on current interests
- ▶ identifying new interests to develop
- ▶ providing more challenging experiences
- ▶ improving resources
- ▶ encouraging creativity
- ▶ meeting new objectives
- ▶ determining how you will achieve EYLF/MTOP outcomes.



Once you have reviewed the evaluation, you need to modify the curriculum or program to ensure there are improved opportunities to stimulate children's interests and develop their creativity.

Consider the following aspects when deciding on the experiences you want to introduce or extend on:

- ▶ What activities can I plan to further the child's interest and development?
- ▶ How will the experiences assist children to achieve outcomes?
- ▶ What props and equipment will I need?
- ▶ How will I set up the experience to ensure it is aesthetically pleasing?
- ▶ Is the experience open-ended?
- ▶ How many children will be involved in the experience at any one time?
- ▶ Will the experience be available at all times?
- ▶ How much time will I provide for it?
- ▶ What is my role and the role of others in the experience?

Example

Extending an experience to stimulate creativity

The evaluation notes show that Isolde (18 months) fed her doll with a spoon.

The educator lists the following ideas for extending this experience to challenge and encourage Isolde's creativity and self-expression:

- ▶ Feeding the doll with a bottle
- ▶ Putting the doll to bed
- ▶ Changing the doll
- ▶ Giving the doll a different name

Once Isolde begins to use these activities on her own, the educator will provide opportunities for her to play in a simple home area.

Learning checkpoint 5

Evaluating experiences

Observe a child as they participate in different experiences and complete the following tasks:

1. Write **four** formative evaluations.

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2. Review the formative information and use this to write a summative evaluation of the child's progress against one EYLF/MTOP outcome.

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