

CHCECE003

Provide care for children

Release 3

Learner guide

Aspire Version 2.1



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CHCECE003 Provide care for children, Release 3



© 2018 One World for Children Pty Ltd
407–411 Thompson Road
NORTH GEELONG VIC 3215 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 5272 2714
www.owfc.com.au

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© 2018 Aspire Training & Consulting
Level 1, 464 St Kilda Road
MELBOURNE VIC 3004 AUSTRALIA
Phone: (03) 9820 1300

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Before you begin

This learner guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE003 Provide care for 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 Providing positive mealtimes**

- 1B Respecting clothing preferences**

- 1C Managing toilet mishaps**

Providing physical care

The physical and emotional care of children is the most important focus of your day. Your day is based on meeting these needs through a balance of tasks, play and interaction. Part of this balance is supporting children to be involved in their own care.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

| 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 | |
| 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 |

1A Providing positive mealtimes

You need to ensure the environment is adequately prepared, and that safe food-handling and hygiene practices are put in place for children’s mealtimes.

Ensuring good hygiene

Good hygiene, including hand-washing, minimises the spread of infectious diseases. By using the guidelines outlined in the following table, you will be able to create and maintain safe and hygienic eating spaces.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Prepare food areas | Before meals, clean surfaces that food may sit on. Food preparation areas, including serving benches and trolleys, can transfer germs to food, so pay attention to hygiene and safety in these areas. |
| Wash hands | <p>Check that all children’s hands are washed before they eat or drink. This is important before all meals, especially when children are serving themselves.</p> <p>Teach children to turn away from food when they cough or sneeze, and then to wash their hands again. You can find fact sheets and posters relating to coughing and sneezing, and a sneeze-safe program at: http://aspirelr.link/sneeze-safe</p> <p>If you have a break between preparing or serving food, remember to wash your hands before recommencing. This includes when returning from a tea break, toilet break, meal break or smoke break.</p> |
| Use individual utensils | <p>Make sure children do not share food, plates or utensils. If children are choosing food from a shared bowl or plate, they should use a spoon or tongs because germs and bacteria can pass from hand to food. Remind children that if they share food, they may spread germs that could make them or other children sick.</p> <p>Use a separate spoon for each infant you feed. If a child drops their spoon, get a new one – rinsing it under a tap does not kill all the germs.</p> |

Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services has information about infection control, food safety and the importance of hand hygiene, and is available at:

<http://aspirelr.link/nhmrc-staying-healthy>

Watch this video to learn about the correct hand-washing technique.



Supervising mealtimes

As children grow, they become more physically capable. Although their skills help them to become more independent during mealtimes, their activity and any distractions are likely to interfere with safe eating. Supervise mealtimes closely and encourage safe eating and drinking. Support children to:

- ▶ prepare for mealtimes by washing their hands
- ▶ participate in preparing meals by setting tables, organising the meal area, and preparing and serving foods
- ▶ sit down to eat and drink
- ▶ talk only when their mouth is empty
- ▶ use appropriate utensils for the task; for example, using a spoon to eat soup
- ▶ use utensils safely; that is, use them for their intended purpose of eating or drinking
- ▶ use the utensils in a hygienic manner; for example, get a clean utensil if one falls on the floor
- ▶ clean up after mealtimes by packing away the area, cleaning utensils, scraping plates, washing dishes and resetting activities.

The following table sets out some things to be aware of for each age group.

| Developmental stage | What to expect | Supervision suggestions |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Infant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Tasting, touching, smearing ▶ Learning to use a spoon, starting with a soft spoon and moving to a regular metal spoon ▶ Eating foods that are soft and smooth, progressing to chewable foods ▶ Using a bottle or sip cup ▶ Developing skills in moving food from the bowl and spoon to their mouths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Keep food from being smeared in the eyes and nose. ▶ Feed children to ensure their needs are met. ▶ Support the use of a spoon and cup without spilling and/or replenish any food or drink that is spilt. ▶ Maintain contact at all times to avoid choking. ▶ Focus on satisfying their hunger. |

| Developmental stage | What to expect | Supervision suggestions |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <p>Toddler</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Sometimes experimenting with food; for example, putting peas in their nose ▶ Usually focused on satisfying their hunger/thirst ▶ Using a cup and learning to use a fork and later a knife ▶ Using serving implements such as tongs ▶ Chewing harder foods and eating a wider range of foods ▶ Combining foods, including eating hard and soft foods together; for example, mash and meat ▶ Showing interest in other people's food ▶ Using utensils imaginatively; for example, as a sword or to draw on the table ▶ Looking at how other children do things and trying these for themselves ▶ Looking at what else is going on in the environment ▶ Focusing on foods they like and dislike ▶ Making choices about foods they eat ▶ Finding distractions that may draw them away from the table ▶ Helping with simple mealtime routines either with assistance or independently, such as putting their plate out or setting the table | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Observe safe use of foods. ▶ Ensure utensils are used safely and for the purpose they were designed for. ▶ Encourage children to pay attention to chewing their foods if they are distracted. ▶ Provide enough food and drink to ensure their needs are met. ▶ Acknowledge their likes and dislikes to ensure their needs are met. ▶ Remind them about the need to chew foods well. ▶ Discuss safe and unsafe activities with food and utensils. ▶ Help the children focus on eating. ▶ Respect decisions and act to support the child. ▶ Remind children about simple nutrition facts, such as healthy foods to eat. ▶ Encourage children to sit at the table until they have finished eating. ▶ Support children to carry out mealtime tasks safely and hygienically. |

| Developmental stage | What to expect | Supervision suggestions |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Preschooler | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Enjoying particular foods ▶ Using knives, cups and tongs ▶ Trying different cutlery, such as chopsticks ▶ Socialising during mealtimes; for example, telling stories and discussing things outside of the service ▶ Being less focused on the food they are eating and more on what is happening socially around the eating area ▶ Serving their own meal and completing more complex mealtime routines, such as setting the table, clearing dishes and washing up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Encourage a choice of foods to enable the children to enjoy and be engaged in mealtimes. ▶ Encourage social discussion around the table. ▶ Support children to take up activities they are interested in after eating rather than during mealtimes. ▶ Encourage their involvement in mealtime routines in a safe way and give reminders when needed. ▶ Talk about healthy foods and benefits of particular foods. |

Positive and fun interactions

During mealtimes, educators can engage children in positive and fun interactions while they supervise their safety. Mealtimes are times for both adults and children to chat freely and talk about their interests. To make the most of this time, you can supervise by sitting at the table with children or sitting nearby if you are supervising more than one table of children.

Engage with children during eating and drinking times by:

- ▶ sharing discussions with children, either one-on-one or in small groups
- ▶ encouraging healthy eating and drinking habits
- ▶ discussing the nutritional values of different food and drinks, and why some are better than others
- ▶ explaining why water and milk are the best choices for drinks
- ▶ creating enjoyable environments; for example, have music playing in the background
- ▶ helping children learn about hygiene by modelling appropriate actions and supporting children in their attempts
- ▶ talking to children about the meal; for example:
 - What colours can you see?
 - What textures do you notice?
 - What does it taste like?
 - How was it prepared?

- ▶ discussing the origin of the food or drink provided, including:
 - the country it is from
 - whether it grows in the ground or on a tree
 - whether it comes from an animal or plant
 - whether and how it is processed
- ▶ showing enthusiasm about the food and drink being provided.

Practice task 1

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

Case study

Joan, an educator, is sitting with a group of children:

- ▶ Lisa (four years)
- ▶ Ben (three years)
- ▶ Kristen (18 months)
- ▶ Sandy (eight months).

Sandy is sitting in a highchair with Joan by her side feeding her apple puree using a spoon. Sandy holds her own spoon and occasionally dips it into the apple and takes it to her mouth, even though she is not really gathering much food on the spoon.

Lisa, Ben and Kristen all sit together at a small table using forks to eat their meal. Today they are serving their own pasta bake using a ladle.

Joan is in reach of the small table. She thanks Lisa when she helps the other children serve their meals; encourages Ben to try using the ladle himself; and supports Kristen to try using the ladle by holding her hand.

1. List the times when Joan should wash her hands.

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2. What would you do if Sandy throws her spoon on the floor?

- Pick it up and give it back to her.
- Pick it up, then get Sandy a clean spoon.
- Leave it on the floor and tell Sandy she can't have a spoon anymore.

Give a reason for your answer.

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3. How could you have been prepared for Sandy to throw her spoon?

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4. If Lisa and Ben start to laugh and wiggle, and call out that the tomato in the pasta bake is blood, what could you do to ensure they remain safe?
- Tell them to stop right now and sit up straight.
 - Laugh and say: 'It does look a little like blood. Now, let's sit carefully or you might get hurt'.
 - Explain that you will have to get them to sit apart if they keep laughing.

Give a reason for your answer.

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1B Respecting clothing preferences

Many factors determine the selection of children's clothing. As children develop, they should be encouraged to take more responsibility for their choices. To select clothing, an adult or child must have some experience and knowledge of how each clothing item supports their needs. The following table provides some of the factors that determine clothing choices.

| Factor | What choices are based on |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Climate | The weather conditions influence how you keep your body warm or cool. |
| Body temperature | Some children are warm or cool whatever the climate. Children who are active may become hot quickly, and children with skin conditions such as eczema may feel uncomfortable if they are too hot. |
| Materials | The use of natural or synthetic materials may depend on how the skin reacts and how comfortable they feel on the body. Some materials may irritate the skin. |
| Cost | The cost of clothing can influence whether parents provide enough, whether it is well maintained or whether it meets trends encouraged by peers or expected by the family. |
| Practicality and style | Clothing should be suited to the activities carried out during the day. Painting, climbing, sand play, crawling and toilet learning are all examples of activities that need particular clothing choices. As children get older, they may request a particular style because it is fashionable or because their friends wear it. |
| Culture | Racial or ethnic background, socioeconomic and life experiences affect clothing choice and the type of materials selected. |
| Requirements | Some clothing may be mandatory; for example, there may be a uniform, or a hat may need to be worn at all times when outside. |
| Storage | It is practical to have enough clothing to meet needs, but as little as possible to avoid things being misplaced. The clothing used at the organisation should be labelled with the child's name or the organisation's name if it is spare clothing. |
| Safety | Children often overlook safety when choosing and wearing clothing, and they may need support to ensure shoelaces are tied and hats remain on heads. Be aware that children may also select clothing influenced by peers or social situations rather than the activities they are involved in. |
| Past experiences | The clothing may have been comfortable or uncomfortable in the past. The child may have received positive or negative comments about the clothing choice, which influences their current choice. |

Individual preferences

When selecting their own clothing, children will most likely make mistakes or inappropriate choices. It is wise to have some appropriate alternatives. Encourage parents to provide additional clothing or gather some spare clothes yourself; this will allow children to dress in a way they feel is adequate, then make a change if they feel they need to alter their choice.

As all children and families are different, you may care for children who:

- ▶ may wear clothing that is common to a particular cultural group
- ▶ are reluctant or unwilling to undress in front of children of the opposite sex
- ▶ wear many layers of clothing
- ▶ are encouraged to wear as little as possible when in the sun
- ▶ wear expensive or restrictive clothing
- ▶ do not have enough clothing to keep them warm
- ▶ do not wear underwear.

Sun-safe clothing

Your initial concern should be about whether the child is dressed to match the weather conditions. You must also follow their parents' instructions and your service's policy and procedures. Be flexible and acknowledge the individual child's clothing preferences whenever possible. However, your first priority is to ensure they are safe. This will mean enforcing sun safety at all times.

Sun-safe clothing includes:

- ▶ sun-protective hats that cover the face and neck
- ▶ clothing that covers the neck, shoulders and arms (i.e. has a collar and sleeves)
- ▶ pants or a skirt that covers the legs as much as possible.

Practice task 2

1. John (three years) arrives on a cold winter day wearing a T-shirt. His mother tells you there is a jumper in his bag if he needs it. He is obviously comfortable in the T-shirt and shows no sign of being cold. Do you insist he wear a jumper? Why or why not? Use a service policy related to children's clothing to guide your answers.

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2. Identify an outcome from *Belonging, being & becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (EYLF) that supports your previous response. Access the EYLF at <http://aspirelr.link/approved-learning-frameworks>

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3. The parents of Aida (five years) have told you that she must never undress in front of boys or go to the toilet when boys are in the bathroom. How would you cater for this need?

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1C Managing toilet mishaps

Despite a child's age or developmental level, toileting mishaps may occur. To prepare for these, and to help protect self-esteem and privacy, you can:

- ▶ keep spare clothes on hand
- ▶ be flexible and allow children to use the toilet when they ask to
- ▶ react calmly to accidents
- ▶ support children without overshadowing them
- ▶ understand that children often identify a need to use the toilet shortly before they go, rather than when you ask them or when it is convenient
- ▶ accept that accidents will happen
- ▶ provide information for parents if necessary.



Treat a child who has accidents at the toilet-learning stage differently to a child with full control, as accidents are more common (and expected) during toilet learning and less common for more capable children.

At any age, a child may have an accident due to:

- ▶ not being ready to start toilet learning or having physical difficulties
- ▶ lack of self-esteem and feeling that they have little privacy; for example, insecure toilet doors or an open-plan bathroom
- ▶ not feeling comfortable in the environment
- ▶ lack of support, encouragement and supervision
- ▶ fear of punishment
- ▶ having drunk more fluids than usual
- ▶ cold weather
- ▶ excitement
- ▶ health issues
- ▶ a change in diet
- ▶ distractions
- ▶ clothing they are unable to remove
- ▶ fear or anxiety.

As the causes of toileting accidents are either out of the child's control or part of a larger issue, it is unreasonable to punish a child for toileting accidents. Be aware that an ongoing problem may indicate an infection or emotional issue, or it may just be that the child has difficulty focusing on bodily functions while busy in an activity.

Whatever the cause, support the child to return to a clean and dry state. This may depend on the age and stage of development; for example, a toddler may be unconcerned about changing their pants in the open bathroom in the presence of other children. However, an older child may require privacy and a careful, discreet reaction from you to ensure their self-esteem is protected.

Remember to follow all of the usual toileting hygiene practices, including thorough hand-washing by both child and adult. Wear gloves as you would if changing a nappy, and be sure to clean the child's skin so the risk of rashes and sores is limited.

Toilet learning and self-esteem

Controversial support strategies are sometimes used to support toilet learning, including:

- ▶ tangible rewards – a reward, such as a toy or treat, that is given by an adult when the child does what they want
- ▶ incentive charts – a symbolic reward, such as a star chart, that is used to encourage the child to perform a certain action.

These rewards are usually given immediately or shortly after the child is successful. They can be harmful to self-esteem when some children miss out because they are unable to control their toileting needs, or are not ready to show consistent toileting abilities.

As these strategies involve reward for a task achieved, when the child does not succeed, it becomes a punishment to miss out. The child thinks, 'I have had a toileting accident, so I won't get a reward. I must be bad.' The child may therefore be punished for something they have no control of.

Tangible rewards and incentive charts are useful when children are tracking activities they are in control of (for example, practising a musical instrument, feeding a fish and drying the dishes). They are also useful if the child is able to measure the success of a newly learned behaviour or action.

Example

Star chart for toilet learning

Judy (18 months) has been unsuccessfully toilet training for a few weeks. An incentive chart has been implemented, and every time she uses the toilet successfully, she gets a star on the chart. When she tries to use the toilet unsuccessfully or has a toileting accident, she doesn't get a star. This does not seem to be working too well and Judy has become more upset about using the toilet. She is trying hard to learn to use the toilet, but isn't being encouraged when she tries. The incentive chart may not be working because Judy has not shown signs of readiness to toilet train or her ability to notice signs of needing to use the toilet are not developed yet. This means she is not able to complete this task consistently. The star chart reminds her that she is unable to succeed.

Practice task 3

1. Martin is two years old. He is learning to use the toilet. Martin tried to go to the toilet, but his pants got stuck and he had a toileting accident. What are three things you would do to handle this situation?

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2. Another educator, Susan, approaches you and suggests that an incentive chart should be used for Martin. What would you say to Susan?

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3. Despite your advice, Susan decides to implement an incentive chart for Martin. The next week Martin has a toileting accident when all the toilets were in use and he had to wait. What would you say to Martin if he was upset and asked if he could still have a star on his chart?

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Summary

- ▶ Engage children at mealtimes and ensure they are supervised.
- ▶ Be aware of service, parent and child clothing needs.
- ▶ Encourage children to take responsibility for their own clothing needs.
- ▶ Toileting accidents are common and may occur for a variety of reasons.
- ▶ A child's self-esteem and privacy must be considered when a toilet accident occurs.

Learning checkpoint 1

Providing physical care

1. Read an organisational policy regarding children’s clothing requirements. What clothing requirements are set by the policy?

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2. Read the scenarios below. Choose the scenario that you feel is most appropriate and explain your choice.

Scenario 1: Jemima the educator has served lunch to four preschool-age children who are sitting around a table. She stands at the food trolley so she can see all the children clearly and so she can serve the children more food if they want it.

Scenario 2: Don the educator has placed the serving bowl of lunch on the table where four preschool children are sitting. He sits at the corner of the table so he can see the children clearly, support them to serve themselves hygienically and discuss the food and their busy morning.

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3. What are **four** topics of engaging conversation you could have with children during mealtimes?

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4. If a child is learning to use the toilet, which of the following **two** clothing items would be most suited? For each of the items you choose explain your choice.

- Overalls (pants with straps over the shoulders)
- Jeans with button fastening
- Trousers with elastic waist
- Skirt
- Tights

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5. What are **five** reasons that a child might have a toileting accident?

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6. How might you respect the privacy and self-esteem of a five-year-old child who has had a toileting accident?

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7. What hygiene procedures should be followed when dealing with toileting accidents? Include the child and educator hygiene needs.

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Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

2A Following guidelines for physical activity

2B Encouraging movement and physical activity

Promoting physical activity

Play and physical activity are important parts of children's lives. Not only are they fun, but regular physical activity during early childhood impacts their health as they grow, and may help children develop healthy behaviours in the future. Active play also lays foundations for the development of physical, mental and social skills, such as sharing and taking turns.

As you implement activities to meet each child's physical needs, there are many opportunities for you to extend the child's understanding of themselves and others. From their direct involvement in these activities, children gain essential skills and knowledge that they can draw on throughout their lives.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

| National Quality Standard | |
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| ✓ | Learning through play |
| ✓ | Intentional teaching |
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| | 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 |

2A Following guidelines for physical activity

There are many guidelines educators follow in the education and care services sector. From these, individual service policies and procedures are developed, as well as training and professional development topics. A number of support materials are available to assist educators to meet the physical needs of children, not only to provide stimulating experiences, but also to respond to poor access to services or health issues, such as obesity.



Watch this video to learn how physical activity contributes to development.

Sector guidelines

Some of the education and care sector guidelines relating to physical activity are set out in the following table.

| Guideline | What it says |
|--|--|
| <p>Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics</p> <p>Source: The Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics extract is reprinted with permission. www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au</p> | <p>Core principles:</p> <p>Play and leisure are essential for children’s learning, development and wellbeing.</p> <p>In relation to children, I will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ act in the best interests of all children ▶ create and maintain safe, healthy, inclusive environments that support children’s agency and enhance their learning ▶ provide a meaningful curriculum to enrich children’s learning, balancing child- and educator-initiated experiences ▶ understand and be able to explain to others how play and leisure enhance children’s learning, development and wellbeing. |
| <p>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</p> | <p>Article 31: Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities</p> |
| <p>National Quality Standard (NQS)</p> | <p>Element 2.1.3 – Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child</p> |

The early years learning framework

The EYLF is very specific and provides principles, practices and outcomes that assist educators to understand children and their needs, and promote physical activity. Consider the following table.

| Guidelines | What they encourage |
|--|---|
| Principles | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High expectations and equity ▶ Ongoing learning and reflective practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Providing challenges and taking risks ▶ Supporting the learning of new skills ▶ Reflecting on the child as an individual, what their skills are and how their needs can be met |
| Practice | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Responsiveness to children ▶ Learning through play ▶ Intentional teaching ▶ Learning environments ▶ Assessment for learning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Acknowledging children's strengths ▶ Responding to children's ideas and play ▶ Being open to children wanting to adapt the environment for their play ▶ Stimulating activity through participation ▶ Providing time for learning ▶ Modelling, demonstrating, questioning, explaining and engaging children ▶ Planning, evaluating and reflecting to increase the suitability of the environment and its experiences |
| Outcomes | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency ▶ Children take increased responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Providing choices and a range of activities ▶ Maintaining high expectations ▶ Showing enthusiasm for children's attempts and successes ▶ Supporting children to persist in their activity ▶ Planning and providing energetic activity ▶ Sharing familiar physical games ▶ Supporting the balance of activity and rest |

Other relevant guidelines

Outside the education and care industry, child-focused guidelines and support materials have been developed as part of government programs to promote health. You can use the resources in the table below to get some great ideas for extending children’s understanding of their physical health and wellbeing.

| Resource | What it includes |
|---|--|
| <i>Get up & grow</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Age-appropriate activities and equipment ▶ How to promote physical play ▶ Safety recommendations |
| <i>Get set 4 life – Habits for healthy kids</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lots of parent tips, pictures, posters and stickers to use to teach children healthy habits ▶ Pages of activity ideas |
| <i>National physical activity recommendations for children 0–5 years</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Active play ideas and tips to help children develop healthy television viewing habits |
| <i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Hand-washing and other information related to hygiene and how it prevents infectious disease |

Get up & grow

Some physical activity recommendations from *Get up & grow: Healthy eating and physical guidelines for early childhood settings* are outlined in the following table.

| Development stage | Recommendation |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Infants | Floor-based play in safe environments |
| Toddlers and preschoolers | At least three hours of physically active play across the day |
| Infants, toddlers and preschoolers | Should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time, except when sleeping |
| Children under two | No time using screens, including television, tablets, computers and electronic games |
| Children aged two to five | Limit of one hour per day using television, tablets, computers, electronic games, etc. |

National physical activity guidelines

The *National physical activity guidelines for Australians* is linked to Australia's physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines. These guidelines include a range of resources, such as:

- ▶ *National physical activity recommendations for children 0–5 years* (this is represented in the brochure *Move and play every day*, which is available online at: <http://aspirelr.link/move-and-play-every-day>)
- ▶ *Australia's physical activity and sedentary behaviour guidelines for children (5–12 years)*

These resources provide ideas on how to:

- ▶ reduce screen time
- ▶ break up times of sitting or inactivity
- ▶ support children to be physically active every day
- ▶ provide all children with physical challenges and enjoyment.

Example

Encouraging physical activity

Sally, an educator, decides to use the *Get set 4 life* kit to develop a series of healthy exercise group discussions.

She uses the following characters:

- ▶ Biggs loves to tell stories and ask questions.
- ▶ Stretch shows others how to be happy.
- ▶ Tok likes to do lots of active play.
- ▶ Eko loves to learn and do quiet activities.

For the first session, she enlarges the figures and cuts them out so she can introduce them to the children.

First, she explains what each of the characters likes to do. For fun, she encourages the children to pretend to be one of the characters. Some children act out what they think this character might do, while others move around the room to activities they think suit the character. For example, Jedd goes to the book corner and says he is being Biggs. Ivan stays with the group, but stretches his mouth into a massive smile and says he is Stretch.

Sally calls all the children back to be themselves on the mat. She asks what would happen if all they did was read books all day.

The children give their thoughts:

- ▶ 'We will get bored.'
- ▶ 'We will miss out on other things.'
- ▶ 'We won't learn to climb on the A-frame.'

Sally encourages these comments.

At the end of the session, Sally asks each child to tell her what physical activity they like the best. She encourages the children to choose active, challenging experiences and, where possible, suggests that the children do this activity.

Discussing how bodies work

Children will always learn from modelling, but here are some more ideas for discussions with children about how their bodies work. Remember to link your discussions back to how physical activity helps their bodies to be strong and healthy.

| Development stage | Discussion ideas | Examples |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Infants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Talk about activity and movement. ▶ Celebrate achievements such as learning to crawl, walk, etc. ▶ Incorporate song into movement. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ‘Look at your strong legs.’ ▶ ‘Yes! You are walking!’ ▶ ‘Row, row, row your boat.’ |
| Toddlers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Talk about the activities they are completing. ▶ Describe their movements. ▶ Add words that describe the skills they are developing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ‘Look at your strong arms sweeping the floor.’ ▶ ‘That is a huge jump.’ ▶ ‘Now your legs are running fast.’ |
| Preschoolers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Involve the community through activities and visits. ▶ Talk about their body structures and how these work, such as muscles, bones and the brain. ▶ Discuss individual abilities and achievements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invite a dietitian to talk about how food gives you energy. ▶ ‘Milk and cheese provide calcium to our bones to make them strong.’ ▶ ‘Hayley jumps very high and Stacey can run fast. They both have strong legs.’ |

Practice task 4

1. Access the EYLF and look at the outcome that says: ‘Children take an increased responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing’, then answer the following questions.
 - a. Write down an activity that provides children with a choice of how they use their physical skills. Explain how the activity meets the outcome.

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 - b. Write down a physical activity where there are high expectations of children’s physical skills. Explain how the activity meets the outcome.

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2. Access at least one of the following resources:

- ▶ *Get up & grow: Healthy eating and physical guidelines for early childhood settings*, available at: <http://aspirelr.link/get-up-and-grow>
- ▶ *Get set 4 life – Habits for healthy kids*, available at: <http://aspirelr.link/get-set-for-life>
- ▶ *National physical activity guidelines for Australians*, available at: <http://aspirelr.link/physical-activity-guidelines>
- ▶ *National physical activity recommendations for children 0–5 years*, available at: <http://aspirelr.link/pre-5yo-physical-activity>

a. Which resources did you access?

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b. How could you use these resources to help children understand how their bodies work and the importance of physical activity for health and wellbeing?

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2B Encouraging movement and physical activity

All age groups need to be given many opportunities for movement and physically active play. Children need to be able to:

- ▶ extend and develop their skills through challenging activities and experiences where they can try new things
- ▶ involve themselves in physical movements, such as rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, digging, pushing, skipping and climbing
- ▶ actively manipulate their play space by redesigning and reinventing it with movable equipment and props, and practise skills of balancing, bouncing, lifting and pushing.



Emotional and physical needs

Simple emotional needs must be provided for if children are to explore, develop and use their physical skills confidently. Consider the following information about different development stages.

| Development stage | Emotional needs | Physical skills |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <p>Infants</p> | <p>Need to trust their educators and the environment. This allows them to explore freely and use their physical skills to expand their knowledge.</p> | <p>Using the senses to find out about objects and constantly using their body to explore; for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ mouthing ▶ touching ▶ pulling ▶ pushing ▶ tasting. <p>Sequentially learning to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ roll ▶ sit ▶ crawl ▶ stand ▶ walk around with support ▶ stand independently ▶ walk. |

| Development stage | Emotional needs | Physical skills |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Toddlers | Need to try things their way and feel supported to be independent. They need to find out if they are capable, and be encouraged to try again if they fail or make a mistake. | <p>Independent skills are strengthening; for example, they may be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ undress and dress themselves ▶ use the toilet ▶ help with chores. <p>Climbing and running are favourite pastimes. Play is more purposeful, so the child will be interested in completing physical activities such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ puzzles ▶ building with blocks ▶ riding tricycles ▶ completing art projects (drawing, painting, etc.) |
| Preschoolers | Need to take some control over their world and make decisions, solve problems and accomplish tasks. Play is serious and purposeful, and self-esteem increases if they are able to take the initiative and create play that means something to them. | <p>Organised activities are more attractive, including physical games such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ an obstacle course ▶ tug of war ▶ duck, duck, goose ▶ doggy, where is your bone? ▶ puzzles and art experiences. <p>Climbing, running and balancing will all become more complex, and children will enjoy being challenged with increasingly difficult tasks.</p> <p>Play will be social and evolve naturally through imagination. This also leads to construction activities using a variety of large and intricate materials. Self-help skills are well developed and now extend to helping others.</p> |

Identifying suitable activities

To identify the activities and experiences best suited to each child, start by observing them. Find out what they do already and what they are interested in. You may notice they are confident in some areas and are learning or being challenged in others. Set out some activities to measure the child's skill levels if needed.

Planned

You organise activities for the children.

Spontaneous

Play happens automatically and is led by an idea that occurs during play.

Structured

You plan, organise and direct activities.

Unstructured

Play moves at the child's pace and follows their interests.

An activity that is best suited to the child will:

- ▶ be of interest to them
- ▶ allow them to adapt and change the play so that it meets their needs
- ▶ provide a challenge, but not be too frustrating or scary.

You will notice if the child is frustrated or fearful. Children display a lack of confidence in different ways, but some common signs include that they:

- ▶ tell you they can't do it
- ▶ cling to you
- ▶ stop or do not progress in the activity
- ▶ show anger through their words or actions
- ▶ refuse to try.

Implementing movement activities

Movement activities are those that encourage children to use their various muscles in coordination; for example, building with blocks, sorting items and balancing. Movements like this use the brain and body together, and can help the child to think more clearly.

The term 'gross motor skills' refers to the actions that use the large muscles of the body. The term 'fine motor skills' refers to the actions that use the small muscles of the body. You can identify whether a child is using gross or fine motor skills by observing them at play.



Indoor play

Indoor play mainly provides opportunities for children to develop fine motor skills. Infants and toddlers usually use indoor areas for:

- ▶ discovery – exploring interesting items with their senses safely
- ▶ playing with wheeled toys
- ▶ manipulative play
- ▶ block play.

Preschoolers develop their physical skills from indoor activities such as:

- ▶ dramatic play
- ▶ building with blocks
- ▶ puzzles, threading and construction sets
- ▶ clay modelling, painting, drawing and collage
- ▶ sand and water play
- ▶ woodwork
- ▶ cooking.

As children's bodies grow larger and take up more space, their skills also increase. However, it becomes unsafe for them to practise gross motor skills in busy indoor areas. A gymnasium is a perfect place to develop gross motor skills indoors.

Movement and physical activity can be integrated into daily activities, not just play. For example, where appropriate, encourage movement, participation and development of independence through activities such as:

- ▶ allowing children to help set up or pack up activities
- ▶ setting tables for meals and snacks
- ▶ cleaning up their own activities
- ▶ dressing themselves.

Outdoor play

The outdoor space needs the same level of consideration as indoors; there should be opportunities for activities that help to develop children's fine and gross motor skills.

Many services provide children with the opportunity to move indoors and outdoors as they please – usually called an 'indoor-outdoor program'. Your staff ratios and service design will determine if this is an option for you. Almost all activities planned indoors can be offered in an outdoor space, so if an indoor-outdoor program is not possible, consider this extension.

Outdoor play spaces need to be clearly defined so children can immediately see how the space can be used. This allows them to move easily between spaces without interfering with the play of others. Stepping stones and the use of other natural features can provide children with creative options for their physical play. Open-ended materials allow educators and children to rearrange equipment, change location, add or remove materials, and provide either simple or complex play arrangements. Open-ended materials encourage children to engage in spontaneous play. Spontaneous play stimulates children's creativity and imagination, and allows them to develop their own ideas and themes of play.

You can encourage spontaneous physical play by providing things such as:

- ▶ wooden planks
- ▶ car tyres
- ▶ small ladders
- ▶ A-frames
- ▶ outdoor blocks
- ▶ off-cut logs.

Participating with children

As an educator you are constantly modelling behaviour. Everything you do is watched by children. They use this as a way of learning how things should be done. The ways you interact with children and the modelling you provide set the scene and encourage certain attitudes and actions. This helps develop their understanding of the world and how they should work in it.

Modelling your enjoyment of physical activities can be difficult, as you need to balance your supervision requirements with your involvement. The way you participate in a physical activity may change due to this responsibility and will depend on the number of children you are educating. The following are some examples of ways to participate and demonstrate enthusiasm.

Example 1

At a busy slide, your enjoyment may be demonstrated through spontaneous singing, celebration of children's achievements, laughter and encouragement.

Example 2

In a quiet sandpit, your enjoyment may be demonstrated by creating sandcastles, talking about what you and the children are doing, working together on a project, singing or chatting about the materials or resources.

Practice task 5

1. Read case studies 1–4, and then select which type of play is demonstrated by placing a tick in the appropriate column in the table on the next page.

Case studies

Outdoors

1. Jim is supervising the children outdoors when three children ask him if he can help build an obstacle course. Jim assists the children to build their course, ensuring they are able to access the materials they need and that the course is safe.
2. The next day, Jim sets up the A-frames, balance boards, stepping stones and tyres in the obstacle course he has designed. He organises how he wants the activity to look and thinks about what challenges the children will face as they negotiate the course.

Indoors

3. Jim sets up a building block area in one corner of the room and adds some farm animals and tractors to the materials.
4. Later in the day, Jim organises the children into a small group and talks about the block play today and the various animals. He sings 'Old MacDonald' with the children and encourages them to move around like each of the animals.

| Case study | Planned | Spontaneous | Structured | Unstructured |
|------------|---------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |

2. Access a copy of *Get up & grow* at: <http://aspirelr.link/get-up-and-grow>. Find some suggestions that this resource gives to encourage children to move their bodies.

a. List **two** ideas for infants.

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b. List **two** ideas for toddlers.

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c. List **two** ideas for preschoolers.

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3. In the table below, record **six** different physical activities you could do with children, and how you would model your enjoyment of these activities.

| Time | Activity | Indoor or outdoor? | How can you model your enjoyment? |
|------|----------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |
| 6 | | | |

Summary

- ▶ Opportunities for movement and physical activity should be included at all points of the day.
- ▶ When you participate and model your enjoyment of physical activity, this encourages children to do the same.
- ▶ Physical activity can be planned or spontaneous.
- ▶ Activities should suit the child's level of development.
- ▶ Activities can be challenging, but must take the child's comfort level into consideration.
- ▶ Indoor and outdoor play are both important.
- ▶ Children should be made aware of the importance of health and wellbeing, particularly understanding how their bodies work.

Learning checkpoint 2

Promoting physical activity

Part A

1. Access a program of activities or develop one yourself.
 - a. Write down all the movement and physical experiences planned as part of the outdoor program.

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- b. Write down all the movement and physical experiences planned as part of the indoor program.

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2. Which article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child refers to children's right to relax and play?

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3. Access the EYLF. Which outcome and sub-outcome refer to children's health and physical wellbeing?

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4. Access the National Quality Standard (NQS) at: <http://aspirelr.link/national-quality-standard>

Which element of the NQS identifies how indoor and outdoor spaces must be fit for purpose?

Part B

1. Using the following table or similar, describe **three** activities that would encourage children to be active. Come up with one activity appropriate for each age group of infant, toddler and preschooler.

Indicate whether the activity would be indoors or outdoors, planned or spontaneous. Also write down how it would allow you to participate, engage or encourage the children, and discuss physical health and wellbeing.

| | Infant | Toddler | Preschooler |
|---|--------|---------|-------------|
| Activity | | | |
| Indoor/ Outdoor | | | |
| Planned/ Spontaneous | | | |
| How I could participate | | | |
| How I could engage and encourage the children | | | |

| | Infant | Toddler | Preschooler |
|---|--------|---------|-------------|
| What I could discuss in relation to the children's health and wellbeing | | | |

2. Choose the activity you have identified for a toddler in the previous question. Explain how you would change this activity to meet the needs of the following children:

a. An infant

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b. A preschooler

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c. A toddler who is not confident in their physical skills

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3. Which point of the ECA Code of Ethics are you most acknowledging when you change activities to meet the needs of individual children?

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Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

3A Setting up

3B Providing opportunities for participation

Adapting facilities

Children will become more aware of their ability to manage tasks themselves as you provide opportunities for them to participate in their environment, practise their skills, and develop into capable and effective individuals. These opportunities help them to become interested in how they can increase their skills. By encouraging this exploration and skill development, you will help children increase their self-esteem and sense of self.

Children's developing independence (autonomy) is particularly influenced by their environment and the ways in which you provide opportunities for this to occur.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

| 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 | |
| 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 |

3A Setting up

Your service environment is different to other places you may visit or work in. Consider, for example, a restaurant, theatre, supermarket or sporting arena. The presence of children may be expected in these places, but the children would spend short periods of time there, participate in limited activity and be under the close supervision of an adult.



In your service, children spend a lot of time conducting their own activities and should be able to fully participate in as many different activities as possible. To provide an appropriate area, you will need to consider the requirements of different environments and the various developmental abilities of children.

Watch this video about creating activities appropriate for different children.



Ensuring a safe environment

Common injuries that occur in service environments include:

- ▶ falls (the most common cause of injury)
- ▶ strains and sprains
- ▶ grazes
- ▶ hits
- ▶ bites.

Your knowledge of the environment and the children you educate assists you to provide safe, suitable areas for play and routines. However, there are also a number of guidelines you must take into consideration, including:

- ▶ Regulation 110 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations: Ventilation and natural light
- ▶ Element 3.1.1 of the NQS: Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures, and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child
- ▶ EYLF
- ▶ SunSmart guidelines

Ventilation and lighting

You must ensure there is adequate ventilation, temperature levels and fresh air. Ventilation and room temperature are the two main environmental factors that contribute to the spread of infection. Children need to be warm or cool depending on weather conditions, but children of any age require time outdoors and rooms that are properly ventilated as often as possible.

Proper lighting is an essential requirement if both you and the children are to complete tasks successfully. Although artificial light can provide adequate lighting, natural light from windows and skylights offers better quality light and saves on energy consumption. Some people react badly to long periods of artificial light, experiencing headaches and stress from glare or the colour of the light.

Natural light has benefits, but it also needs to be controlled, as hot sun streaming through a window creates an overheated room and, depending on the type of glass and other conditions, could cause sunburn.

Children who choose to rest must be able to enjoy a darkened space to aid their rest times.

Furniture, equipment and facilities

A children's playroom should immediately give an impression that children are part of its operation. There should be child-sized furniture, evidence of children's work displayed at the child's level, and toys and equipment that appeal to children's interests. To a child, this sort of environment is inviting. It can stimulate their interest, encourage them to investigate, indicate where things belong and tell them what they are expected to do.



EYLF statements

The following table provides a summary of the relevant principles, practice and outcome statements from the EYLF that relate to creating appropriate environments to promote physical activity.

| Item | Summary |
|-------------------|---|
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ High expectations and equity ▶ Ongoing learning and reflective practice |
| Practice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Holistic approaches ▶ Responsiveness to children ▶ Learning through play ▶ Intentional teaching ▶ Learning environments ▶ Assessment for learning |
| Outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency. ▶ Children develop dispositions for learning, such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, persistence, imagination and reflexivity. ▶ Children develop a range of skills and processes, such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigation. ▶ Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another. |

To create an appropriate environment – particularly in terms of acknowledging the EYLF principles, practices and outcomes – you must be able to engage children by creating a child-friendly and challenging setup. You need to support them to confidently participate in the play they enjoy and the interests they value. This will help them feel they are capable of doing things for themselves. These skills of independence, commonly called life skills, begin early and are influenced by your attitude, and the education and care environment.

Promoting sun protection

Every activity should be carefully considered to ensure the environment it takes place in is safe. Sun exposure can have serious consequences. Heat from the sun can cause sunburn and may eventually result in skin cancer. Sunburn should never occur in child-focused services; all children should be carefully protected. Infants under 12 months should never be exposed to direct sunlight.

To find out more, visit: <http://aspirelr.link/sun-smart>

The following is a summary of basic guidelines to follow

High exposure levels

When ultraviolet (UV) radiation levels are three or above, adults and children must demonstrate appropriate sunsafe practices by:

- ▶ wearing clothing that reduces skin exposure
- ▶ wearing a hat that protects the face, neck, ears and eyes
- ▶ using an SPF 30+ (or higher) sunscreen that has been applied 20 minutes before exposure to the sun
- ▶ seeking shade where possible
- ▶ wearing sunglasses (optional).

When UV levels are high, exposure to the sun's rays can cause dehydration, eye damage and premature ageing of the skin. Even more serious is the fact that Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world, caused by excessive exposure to UV rays. These facts require you to take responsibility to protect children and yourself from these conditions.

Follow all sunsafe procedures and strategies at all times to ensure you model behaviours, and consistently support and encourage children.

Balancing UV exposure

When UV radiation levels are below three, some sun exposure is recommended (except in alpine or snow areas) as it assists the body to develop vitamin D. Vitamin D regulates calcium levels in the blood and is necessary for the development and maintenance of healthy bones, muscles and teeth.

You can find out what the UV radiation level is by:

- ▶ checking the UV alert issued by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)
- ▶ reading reports in daily newspapers, some television and radio weather forecasts, and at: <http://aspirelr.link/sun-smart>
- ▶ purchasing a UV radiation meter
- ▶ downloading a UV alert app or widget on your mobile.

Practice task 6

1. Access the *Guide to the National Quality Framework* at:
<http://aspirelr.link/nqf-guide>

This document is regularly updated online to keep you up to date with all the NQF changes.

- a. Read the supporting information relating to Regulation 110 and answer the following questions.

- i. What does ventilation help to reduce?

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- ii. How can natural ventilation be provided?

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- iii. Why is natural light beneficial for both adults and children?

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- b. Read the supporting information relating to Element 3.1.2 of the NQS. What does it aim to achieve?

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2. Look around a room in a service that is used by children, and answer the following questions.

- a. What do you see that tells you the age range of the children using this room?

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- b. What do you see that tells you that the children can try things or do things themselves?

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- 3. Find out how to identify UV radiation levels. Identify UV radiation levels for a day, with or without support.

- a. What method did you use for identifying the UV levels?

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- b. What levels did you find for each hour throughout the day between 9 am and 3 pm?

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3B Providing opportunities for participation

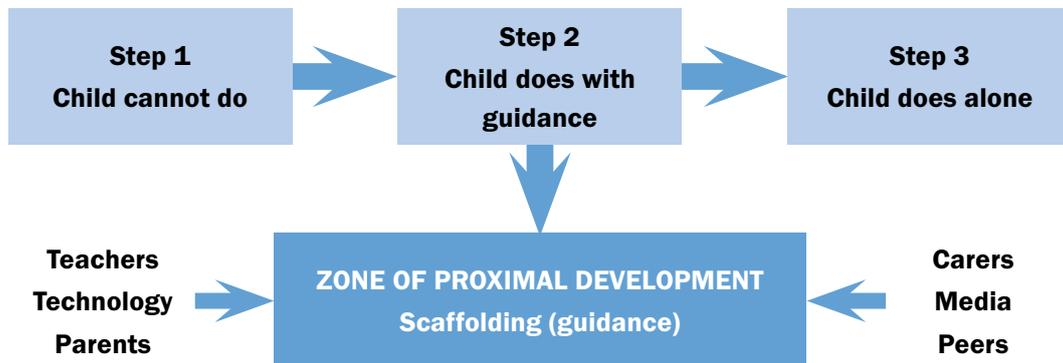
To facilitate opportunities for children to participate in movement and physical activity, you can:

- ▶ scaffold children's learning and offer chances for risk-taking
- ▶ use day-to-day activities as opportunities to develop movement skills
- ▶ incorporate movement and physical activity into life skill development.



Scaffolding

Lev Vygotsky provides a clear picture of how a child's environment and community enrich critical learning periods, windows of opportunity or teachable moments. Vygotsky shows that if a child is assisted to develop a skill when they are ready – that is, when the skill is emerging – they will be able to learn that skill and use it independently soon after. Vygotsky calls this window of opportunity 'the zone of proximal development', which can be put into a diagram, as follows.



When a child demonstrates an emerging skill, they seek guidance. Alternatively, you may identify the emerging skill and offer guidance. Vygotsky calls this guidance 'scaffolding' and does not limit it to just what the educator provides; there are many different ways for a child to receive scaffolding.

Scaffolding is when you support a child to learn a new skill through small learning experiences that build on their current knowledge and skills.

Scaffolding occurs through many actions you provide, including:

- ▶ showing
- ▶ explaining
- ▶ demonstrating
- ▶ talking about
- ▶ instructing
- ▶ encouraging.

Scaffolding encourages children to attempt new and different things as they explore the world and develop skills that they will eventually be able to use independently. This encouragement must be genuine and specific. It must not rely on how successful the child has been, but on the attempt that was made.

The scaffolding you provide throughout the day shows that you value the child's attempts and are providing for their interests. You are also giving them reason and opportunity to try again.

The following scenarios show how you can scaffold children's learning experiences.

Shoelaces

A child is trying to do up their shoelaces. They can only tie the first knot, but can't do the bow.

You commend them for being able to tie the knot and encourage them to complete the bow on their next attempt.

Climbing

A child is trying to climb over the A-frame. They can get to the top of the frame, but show anxiety and unsteadiness attempting to go over the top.

You commend them for being able to get to the top and encourage them to try to go over the top with you nearby. You offer to steady them as they move over the top, but you also accept if they are too unsteady to go any further. You suggest they watch another child to see how they manage the climb.

Taking appropriate risks

As you develop your knowledge of child development and the individual abilities of each child, you will be able to provide more suitable scaffolding experiences. You will notice that scaffolding includes an element of risk, as the child is learning something new. Appropriate risk-taking is expected as part of development; without risk the child is unable to move forward.

The following examples show how children need to take appropriate risks to further their learning and physical development.

Walking

A child walking around holding the furniture must take an appropriate risk of letting go of the furniture if they are to learn to stand and walk independently.

Climbing

A child climbing an A-frame must take an appropriate risk of climbing over the top if they are to move from one side of the frame to the other.

Mistakes and failures are learning experiences. By focusing on the attempt or progress, you support the child to keep trying and to celebrate what they have accomplished so far. Some children may require more encouragement than others, and some are happy to move onto something else and try again at another time.

To encourage children, use words and phrases such as:

- ▶ 'Well done.'
- ▶ 'I can see how hard you're trying.'
- ▶ 'Did you do that all by yourself?'
- ▶ 'Keep trying – you'll get there eventually.'
- ▶ 'Good job! How about we practise again later/tomorrow?'

Attributes that determine level of risk

The following are basic developmental attributes that contribute to the level of risk a child may take.

| Attribute | Consideration |
|---|--|
| Understanding of safety and danger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ The younger the child, the less aware they will be of what is safe and what is dangerous. This may result in young children placing themselves in inappropriately risky situations. ▶ Some children are not afraid to experiment with their skills and take large risks without thinking through the outcomes. ▶ Some children take time and engage in safe exploration prior to attempting any level of risk. ▶ Some children are afraid of challenges, mistakes and failures. |
| Spontaneous behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Younger children tend to be more spontaneous than older children. ▶ Each child has their own level of response; some children are very spontaneous, and others are very wary of change and new ideas. |
| Ability to follow limits and guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ This may alter due to the child's level of understanding of the limits and guidelines, their enthusiasm for the activity or their need to make decisions and be autonomous. |
| Curiosity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some children are happy to work within the bounds of the activity. ▶ Some want to know about everything linked to the situation; they want to find out how things work and why they are the way they are. |
| Interest in adult-modelled behaviour | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ All children learn from modelling, and each child is attracted to different aspects of the modelled behaviour; for example, one child may be influenced by the way you talk to others, whereas another child is influenced by what you wear or eat. |
| Independence and attempts at greater independence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some children are content to be provided for. ▶ Some children want to do everything for themselves and may become upset if help is provided. |

| Attribute | Consideration |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Understanding of consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Some children are aware of natural consequences due to their experiences of these. ▶ Some children will take risks, unaware of the possible consequences. ▶ Some children will fear consequences even if the risk is minimal. |
| Mobility and stability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Infants are learning to move about and are using raw skills that may cause them to bump and scrape themselves. ▶ Although toddlers show increased control of their bodies, they are trying new things such as running, jumping and balancing. These are risky activities at first. ▶ Preschoolers have developed the ability to control their body and successfully move about, stop and go, and balance. |

Routine activities

Routines occupy a major part of your day. Routine activities can be especially valuable if you slow them down and prioritise children's self-help skills in the process. Self-help or autonomy skills often emerge or can be learnt at these times. They are also times when important physical skills are being used and developed.

Some key skills include:

- ▶ hand-washing – after going to the toilet, before eating and after messy play
- ▶ toileting
- ▶ flushing the toilet after use
- ▶ brushing teeth
- ▶ rinsing their mouth after a meal
- ▶ dressing and undressing
- ▶ discarding tissues in the bin after use.

Allowing time for practice and providing encouragement and support for children to complete all tasks are essential for the children's success. These actions are part of your scaffolding.

With this in mind, it is vital that your routine allows children time for this learning to take place and for them to complete tasks in their own time. Try breaking a task down and considering all the skills that may be required to complete it. There are many stages to each self-help skill, with each stage requiring development to occur in the following skill areas:

- ▶ cognitive skills
- ▶ physical skills
- ▶ social skills
- ▶ emotional skills.

Something quite simple for adults can be quite complex for children, depending on how far the child's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development has progressed. The task may take a long time and require great concentration. It may also require support and encouragement from you.

Example

Removing shoes and socks

Consider the skill of taking off shoes with velcro fastenings and socks.

Task analysis

Prior to commencing the task, the child needs to employ some essential skills and use them throughout the task:

- ▶ Attempting each step of the task requires the social and emotional skills of developing autonomy or independence, curiosity and interest.
- ▶ Identifying what to do first, second, etc. requires the cognitive skill of remembering and sequencing.
- ▶ Placing themselves in a position that enables them to complete each step of the task requires the physical and cognitive skill of remembering, problem-solving and moving.

Steps

1. Hold the end of the velcro tab – a physical skill of pinching two fingers together tightly.
2. Pull the velcro tab open – a physical skill of pinching fingers together while pulling across.
3. Hold the back of the shoe and pull it off the foot – a physical skill of grasping with the whole hand while pulling away from you.
4. Pull the sock down to the ankle or ball of the foot – a physical skill of using two hands at once and holding the sides of the sock with fingers; also a cognitive skill of problem-solving and knowing how far the sock needs to come off the leg before it is free.
5. Pull the sock off the foot by the toe – a physical skill of pinching fingers together while pulling away from you.

Life skill development

Life skills are the abilities to handle problems and questions that occur in everyday life. For children to develop these skills, you must provide environments that allow for exploration and access appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Consider the following when preparing an environment in which children are encouraged to do or try things for themselves:

- ▶ Ensure materials are accessible to them.
- ▶ Keep storage areas open to children.
- ▶ Organise shelving and equipment.
- ▶ Ensure equipment needed to complete tasks is available.
- ▶ Provide access to rooms and spaces where personal care is undertaken, such as lockers and bathrooms.
- ▶ Provide different selections of materials and equipment, showing that children have choices.
- ▶ Display children's work to show individual experimentation and ideas.
- ▶ Provide activities that support self-help skill development, such as using pegs or play dough to strengthen grip.
- ▶ Provide directions, instructions and recipes.

Your interactions with children should also be encouraging. They should:

- ▶ support the children’s ideas and interests
- ▶ encourage the children to want to find out more
- ▶ assist the children to construct their own play situations and learning activities.

You should provide an appropriately challenging environment for children in different age groups to develop their life skills. Evidence of the age range of the children should be immediately observed in:

- ▶ the type and size of equipment offered
- ▶ the types of activities and experiences provided
- ▶ the number and types of choices.

Infant skill development

For their development, infants need to be able to explore and participate in their environment. Natural curiosity and a growing ability to move their body, eat, think and communicate all link to developing the life skills of caring for their own needs.

Infants start their learning journey through reflexes and finding out that their communications cause things to happen. They learn that when they make different sounds, adults react in different ways, and when they move their bodies they can make things change in their environment. Slowly the infant takes on an identity and develops a sense of belonging, confidently building on their skills.

An environment that supports infants’ lifelong learning skills will include the following.

| Factors | Characteristics |
|--|---|
| Type and size of equipment offered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ensure there are smooth edges. ▶ Avoid hinges and closures, hooks, string and attachments. ▶ Provide large materials to allow the infant to hold, grasp, touch and test, but not swallow or choke. |
| Types of activities and experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Activities should be sensory and manipulative-focused. ▶ Encourage tasting, mouthing, smelling, feeling, grasping, pushing and pulling. ▶ Provide hiding and finding activities. ▶ Communicate by copying the infant’s sounds. |
| Number and types of choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide safe choices. ▶ Change choices when the infant indicates they want something new by crying or moving away. |

Toddler skill development

Toddlers know a lot about their world. They have explored it continuously and have created a bond with the adults they come into contact with. They have simple communication skills and can work with you to solve simple problems.

Toddlers are developing life skills related to:

- ▶ hygiene
- ▶ toileting
- ▶ eating independently
- ▶ caring for their own possessions
- ▶ preparing their own drinks
- ▶ sun care.

An environment that supports toddlers' lifelong learning skills will include the following.

| Factors | Characteristics |
|--|---|
| Type and size of equipment offered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide large safe hinges and closures, hooks, velcro and attachments. ▶ Provide materials that allow the toddler to hold, grasp, touch and test, but not swallow or choke – as they get older, this becomes less likely to occur. ▶ Provide open-ended materials that can be used in a variety of ways. ▶ Provide real materials like clothing for dress-ups. ▶ Provide small jugs and serving utensils. |
| Types of activities and experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Allow for imaginative play, including pretending to complete real tasks. ▶ Sensory play is still important for toddlers. ▶ Encourage them to learn about different properties by playing with ice and bubbles, or participating in cooking and gardening. ▶ Provide simple art activities, such as finger painting. ▶ Provide open-ended materials. ▶ Encourage self-care; for example, serving their own food and drink using small utensils. |
| Number and types of choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a range of simple, safe choices using different skills. ▶ Provide some challenging choices within close supervision. ▶ Provide two to three options at once. |

Preschooler skill development

By the time children reach preschool age (between approximately three and five years), they have usually gained many self-help skills, and can make choices based on information and past experience. Preschoolers are keen to learn new words and are often fascinated by scientific discussion and experimentation.

Preschoolers have also reached a level of understanding of right and wrong that allows them to question the practices of other children and adults if these are outside the limits they are aware of. However, they may not have developed a full understanding of how their actions or the environment may affect others.

Preschoolers may extend their interests into the wider community; for example, considerations like water conservation or recycling or other specific community concerns may be of interest.

Preschoolers are developing life skills related to:

- ▶ nutrition decisions
- ▶ mealtime activities
- ▶ dressing and undressing
- ▶ selecting clothing to wear
- ▶ fastening and unfastening shoes
- ▶ washing their hands
- ▶ who to seek when they need help
- ▶ bathing
- ▶ putting away bedding
- ▶ making choices.

An environment that supports preschoolers' lifelong learning skills will include the following.

| Factors | Characteristics |
|--|--|
| Type and size of equipment offered | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide hinges and closures, hooks, ties, buttons, nuts and bolts, hammers and nails. ▶ Provide materials that allow the child to put real skills into practice, such as brooms and mops, pots and pans, jugs, tongs, mixers, beaters, whisks and serving utensils. ▶ Provide open-ended materials that can be used in a variety of ways. ▶ Provide imaginative play items, such as dress-ups and props. |
| Types of activities and experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Allow for imaginative play. ▶ Allow for exploration activities. ▶ Encourage them to learn about different topics like cooking and gardening, their bodies and different job roles. ▶ Discuss what is happening in the community. ▶ Provide experimental art activities. ▶ Provide open-ended materials. ▶ Encourage self-care; for example, serving their own food and drink, and supporting their peers and younger children. |
| Number and types of choices | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Provide a range of complex choices using different skills. ▶ Allow for risk-taking with close supervision. ▶ Provide three or more options at once. |

Practice task 7

1. Observe children playing. If you are not able to observe a child, create a story about a made-up child to answer the following questions. You might get some help by interviewing an educator.

a. Write about a child who is taking appropriate risks as part of their learning. What are they doing and why do you think it is an appropriate risk?

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b. What are **two** scaffolding experiences you could provide?

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c. Write about a child who is taking inappropriate risks as part of their exploration. What are they doing and why do you think it is an inappropriate risk?

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2. Describe an activity that you could implement with children. For this activity, write down how you would:

- ▶ stimulate and extend the children's interests
- ▶ encourage the children to explore interests in their own ways
- ▶ support the children to be independent.

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Summary

- ▶ Outdoor and indoor environments should include appropriate challenges.
- ▶ Scaffolding occurs when you offer children opportunities to learn new skills by building on existing knowledge and skills.
- ▶ Measured risk-taking is essential for healthy development.
- ▶ Sunsafes practices are essential for safe outdoor play.
- ▶ Lighting and ventilation are important aspects that are included in the education and care regulations.
- ▶ Children should be provided with environments that allow them to explore and develop independence.
- ▶ Allowing children to create their own games and experiences and construct their own play settings helps to stimulate them and cater for their interests.

Learning checkpoint 3

Adapting facilities

Read the case study and look closely at the photos, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Bella, a family day care educator, has prepared the play area for the children.

The following is a picture of her indoor setup, which includes paper and pencils; blocks; cushions and open shelves with books, puzzles and other tubs.



This is a picture of her outdoor setup, which includes collage with scissors and glue, sand play and a farm scene.



The children attending today are Michael, aged five, and Tamara, who has just turned three.

Bella is unable to supervise the children unless they are both in the same area at once. She allows the children to move between activities, but they must both be indoors, or both be outdoors.

When the children go outdoors, Bella ensures they follow sunsafe procedures. Today the UV level is above three.

1. Bella has offered Tamara the chance to take an appropriate risk by providing scissors. This activity should be challenging for Tamara and she may need to be provided some scaffolding experiences to succeed in developing the skills needed. What scaffolding experience could Bella provide to help Tamara learn to use scissors?

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2. Reflect on the indoor environment. How is the environment set up so the children can be independent, do things for themselves and create their own activities?

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3. Both Michael and Tamara want to do farm play in the outdoor environment.
 - a. How could you change the play environment to enable both children to be involved in the farm play?

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- b. What could you add to stimulate their interest in farm play?

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- c. Identify one Australian national physical activity recommendation for children under five years that relates to this play.

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4. If the children were going outdoors at 9:30 am, what time should Bella apply their sunscreen? Explain your answer.

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5. On a summer day, Bella feels the children should stay inside as the outdoor area is unpleasantly hot. How might she provide good ventilation and appropriate light to the indoor area?

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Topic 4

In this topic you will learn about:

4A Preparing children for change

4B Responding to emotions

Helping children with change

The way you respond to feelings, fears and change may have a lasting effect on the emotional stability of children. Positive and supportive responses to feelings, fears and change are also things parents expect from you as an educator; they will observe your actions and expectations.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

| 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 | |
| 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 Preparing children for change

Change occurs regularly in everyday life and is constant in the education and care environment. Some children react strongly to small changes, such as a new food being introduced or a different seating position; other children take change in their stride, sometimes enjoying it so much they encourage it and explore it.

Change sometimes involves dramatic or unexpected events. Some changes children experience include:

- ▶ a change in their country of residence
- ▶ new workers starting in the service
- ▶ starting care for the first time, or changing to a new service
- ▶ new children commencing care
- ▶ visitors attending the service
- ▶ students doing placement in the service.



Children may also experience changes in their home and care environment; for example, changes in:

- ▶ staff and educators
- ▶ activities and routines
- ▶ expectations and reactions.

Whatever the change, it should not be taken lightly. Look out for signs that the child may be unsettled; for example, the child may:

- ▶ cling to their parent
- ▶ cry during separation
- ▶ cry or become distressed when transitions occur (moving from one setting to another)
- ▶ have tantrums
- ▶ tell you they will not participate
- ▶ settle with one particular adult, but reject others.

These are signs of fear, insecurity or anger. Therefore, it makes sense that the more secure the environment and relationships in the service, the more likely children will be able to manage change, as they will feel confident, be open to new ideas, be curious and show resilience.

When major changes are expected, you must consider the effect they may have on the children. You can prepare children by informing them of what will occur, giving them some time to get to know a new person or having a practice run prior to the change occurring.

To assist children to manage change, involve them in decisions and provide them with choices about equipment, routines and activities. You can also use some of the strategies suggested later in this topic to help children express their feelings.

Example

Preparing children for change

Melanie is moving house soon. Her educator, Stacey, is aware that Melanie will be unsettled by this change, so she implements some activities that relate to the situation:

- ▶ She puts some boxes in the home corner. She encourages Melanie to join in packing the home corner and moving it to a different space in the room. She then allows Melanie to make some decisions about where things will go.
- ▶ She reads the story *Big Ernie's new home* to the group and encourages the children to talk about when they have moved house.
- ▶ She teaches the children a new song with actions and silly voices that she finds on YouTube, 'Boowa and Kwala: Bye Bye We're Moving House'.

Conducting an orientation

Starting care for the first time or moving to a new service is a significant transition for a child and their parents. Although each child and family will adapt to changes at a different rate and in a different manner, it will always take time and trust to reach a stage where a new routine is understood, becomes predictable and is looked forward to.

There are many brochures, websites and posters that provide advice to parents about what to look for in an education and care environment. Parents may visit a variety of services before their child commences care and may ask for information to see how well the service matches their needs.

Once a family has accepted a place in a service, orientation should occur. Orientation is a time for parents and children to get to know the service, meet the staff and get used to being apart. Orientation is also the process of educators getting to know a new child and family, and gathering information about them. By the end of the orientation, you should have built the foundations of a relationship with both parent and child.

Watch this video to learn more about orientation.



The orientation process may span a number of days or weeks, and may include the following steps.

1**Parent stays, educators observe**

The child attends care while the parent stays the entire time and is involved in play with the child. This enables the child to become familiar with the environment. It also gives educators the chance to observe the parent and child together, and to gather information about how the child reacts and interacts with others.

2**Parent stays, educators talk to parent**

The child attends care while the parent stays the entire time and is involved in play. The parent and educator talk together during the time that the parent is there. The parent completes routines with the educator close by.

3**Educator cares for the child**

Gradually, the educator takes over the routine tasks and begins to care directly for the child.

Each child has their own pace when settling into a new environment. Some will conclude this process in days, while others may require a few weeks to settle in. The age and stage of a child, the child's experiences and temperament, and the needs and abilities of the parents also influence this process. To cater for these variables, allow as much time as necessary for parents to help their child settle into the new environment, so that separation is relaxed and unhurried.

Some parents may be unable to complete a suitable orientation process with you; for example, due to work commitments or being unwell. If this is the case, be particularly aware that the child may experience more difficulty settling in than other children who complete an orientation with their parents. If possible, ask parents to allow their child to attend orientation with another adult who is familiar to them, such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle. This allows you to collect as much information as possible about the needs and interactions of the child.

Meeting basic needs

Psychology theorist Abraham Maslow identified basic needs that must be met before you can progress to satisfying other needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes the needs of children and adults. You may recognise Maslow's theory, presented as a pyramid:



The hierarchy of needs demonstrates that emotional needs link with most human needs. Basic needs are food, rest, sleep, clothes and basic body functions, such as toileting and swallowing.

Once basic physical needs are met, emotional needs are tied in with all other levels, forming a type of foundation for success. Safety, security and limits allow you to feel your emotional needs are being met and acknowledged. Love and belonging support feelings of being needed. Self-esteem and the need for respect, attention and appreciation are directly linked to how people experience and react to feelings, fears and change, as well as how they feel others will experience and react to these things. An emotionally cared for and confident child is one who can attempt to be all they can be.

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs

When children are beginning care, Maslow's hierarchy of needs can assist you to ensure these new clients are well cared for. You can consider these needs by gathering information, building relationships that allow everyone to feel safe and secure, and adapting your environment to cater for children's specific needs so that they can settle in and get the most out of the care environment.

Refer to Maslow's hierarchy of needs to identify the information you need to gather at orientation. This information should be discussed with the parents, and may be recorded on enrolment forms and other documentation.

Knowing this information means you can meet the child's needs for each element to help ensure they reach their full potential.

Developing routines that flow

Children will learn about their own needs and develop trust if you provide routines that meet their individual needs and flow easily from one focus to the next.

Routines benefit adults and children as they allow you to:

- ▶ structure the day so everyone knows what is happening
- ▶ provide predictability so that everyone is ready for the next part of the day
- ▶ plan and prepare for what is next
- ▶ ensure enough time is allowed for children to complete tasks and to be fully involved in the learning process
- ▶ involve children to finish a task and commence another; for example, packing up activities and then setting up for snack time
- ▶ assist children with hygiene according to their particular needs
- ▶ make the most of any one-to-one interaction that may occur.

Daily routines in an education and care service may differ according to a variety of things, including:

- ▶ the age of the children in care
- ▶ the number of staff available
- ▶ individual needs of staff, families and children
- ▶ service management requirements
- ▶ philosophy of staff
- ▶ experience of staff.

The experience and knowledge of you and your colleagues may also influence routines, as there are many ways to implement each routine. You may provide routines that cater for:

- ▶ arrival and departure times
- ▶ toileting
- ▶ tidying up
- ▶ moving from one activity to another
- ▶ play.
- ▶ snack times
- ▶ mealtimes
- ▶ rest and sleep times
- ▶ meeting times

Routines need to be flexible and enjoyable. Make the most of the learning available as you participate in routine activities. All activities provide opportunities for the development of skills and knowledge as well as recognition of cultural needs.

Child-centred routines

An action that is designed to meet the needs of a child as a first priority is called a child-centred practice or a child-centred routine. The NQS focuses on building services that are child-centred (Element 1.1.2: Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests are the foundation of the program). If you have a child-centred routine, it means that you have:

- ▶ consulted parents about their child's needs
- ▶ considered how the service operates and how it can meet the child's needs
- ▶ observed the child and identified how you can meet their needs
- ▶ put into place routines and care practices that meet the child's needs.

Being child-centred means that you understand the needs of the children and provide for these needs as a priority. Consider whether the following types of child-centred routines may work in your service.

Progressive mealtime

A progressive mealtime is when the snack or mealtime foods are prepared and placed out ready to be eaten, and children come in small groups to eat when they are ready. This replaces a group mealtime.

Staggered transition

A staggered transition is one where the individual needs of children are catered for differently within a group. A staggered routine allows some children in the group to start a routine earlier or later than others. For example, younger children may commence eating and preparing for sleep prior to the rest of the group, or preschool children may arrive at different times if they are involved in a kinder program.

Indoor-outdoor program

An indoor-outdoor program is one where educators and activities are available indoors and outdoors at the same time, and children can choose to be indoors or outdoors as their preference or activity dictates.

Many services deliver a clearly structured routine that is flexible, but still followed by the whole group of children. You will find that in most circumstances, children respond well when they are able to move through routines at their own pace or in small groups.

This enables their routines to be implemented in a way that ensures they are provided with choice and flexible timing. It also makes a typical day for an educator more spontaneous and enjoyable.

Whatever the routine, parents, children, staff and management should all have some contribution to how routines operate, and have their needs met as well as possible. Be aware that many routines follow policies, procedures and standards; some of these are set by the organisation, some are guided by legislation and others are guided by quality assurance.

Smooth routine changes

A daily timetable should comprise a variety of routine practices that link together to meet everyone's needs. From experience in the service and in your daily life, you should constantly consider priorities and practicalities regarding when to do particular things. With children this includes the way you move them from one activity or space to the next. This linking or moving from one activity to another may involve interrupting play or a routine activity to move to another type of play or routine.

Smooth routine changes ensure children feel secure and respected when moving from one activity, task or routine to another. Well-planned routine changes are flexible, cater for individual needs and keep the program relaxed and enjoyable. Here are some ways to help you develop and implement smooth routine changes.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Give warnings | Provide a warning to children that a change is approaching. Children often become very engrossed in play and it shows respect when you give them a warning that they soon need to stop. |
| Clear, simple directions | Use clear and simple directions so that children know what you expect. Remember that young children can only remember one or two instructions at a time. |
| Finish activities | If possible, allow children to finish an activity they are engrossed in or provide a means for them to continue later. It is a sign that you value the children's work when you allow them to save what they are doing and continue or complete it later. You may need to consider storage or how you use space to enable this. |
| Appropriate group sizes | Consider whether the group size is appropriate to the activity you are moving to. You may find that you only need to move some children to a new routine, activity or space, and others can come later or may not participate at all. You may also be able to eliminate a structured routine change by using progressive techniques where children choose to move to a routine or activity by themselves. |
| Participation and independence | Allow children to participate and be independent when possible. Remember that the service exists for the children and that the environment is meant to give them a feeling of belonging. Educators often become stressed about what needs to be done and forget that children are capable of taking on responsibilities, particularly if they are supported, encouraged and thanked. |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Allow children to set up and pack away activities</p> | <p>By the time children are preschool age, they are able to set up and pack away most of the activities themselves with guidance. The more responsibility and impact children have over their environment, the greater their sense of security and belonging. Children are often much more capable than adults give them credit for.</p> |
| <p>Tidying up is learning time</p> | <p>Include tidying up as a valuable learning time rather than a chore that must be completed quickly. There are many things a child can learn at this time, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ classifying or sorting – organising things into containers and shelves ▶ placement – putting things in the correct place ▶ care and respect for the environment and equipment – modelling by educators assists children to gain this skill; by helping to care for the equipment, children can feel ownership and responsibility for it ▶ cooperation – working with others to achieve a task ▶ responsibility – for the task, for leading others, for equipment and for their own time and space ▶ independence – developing skills so that they gain greater competence as they grow. |
| <p>Fun changes</p> | <p>Changing from one routine to another can and should be fun.</p> |

Reducing waiting times

For a routine to flow, you must exclude or reduce waiting times and be prepared with ways to fill unexpected waiting times. Waiting time is wasted time, and it demonstrates that you or your colleagues are not well prepared.

The younger the group of children you work with, the less appropriate it is for your routines to include waiting. When an infant cries to tell you they are hungry, sleepy or lonely, they expect to be fed, put to bed or hugged and played with immediately. This is not because they are spoilt, but because they have no concept of time or understanding of the tasks you need to complete to prepare yourself and the environment. They simply recognise they are hungry and then alert you to this fact.

Preschoolers and toddlers should be energetic and involved with you and their peers. They have a limited understanding of time, yet they know what is coming next in most cases. Children of this age see waiting as time to amuse themselves, sometimes in the form of behaviour that may not be appropriate.

Preparation is the best way to exclude waiting times and keep your stress levels low. By having the materials, space, staff and activities ready to go, or at least ready to set up, you can ensure the plan goes smoothly and allows for flexibility.

Communicate with the person who prepares the plan and, once they have completed this, ask if any preparation is required. You may also have a look at the plan when you arrive for the day to see what preparation you can assist with.

Practice task 8

1. How would you prepare an infant for some renovations that are going to take place at your service that will involve a lot of loud noise and strangers on the premises?

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2. What steps should a service encourage when a new child is enrolled?

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3. Do you think the steps you identified in your previous response should be a set process, or be flexible to the needs of individual children and their families?

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4. What are the advantages of conducting an orientation routine?

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5. What negative outcomes could occur if no orientation routine is conducted?

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6. List **five** routines that occur during the day.

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7. Explain how you can ensure the routines are child-centred.

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8. Which routines are in place to ensure a smooth separation between parents and children?

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9. Access a policy that relates to rest and sleep times. Write down the statements that encourage sleep and rest times to be adapted to individual needs.

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10. Write down one routine that is a staff requirement, but must still take children's needs into account.

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11. Identify **three** things you could do with children of the following age groups if you find yourself waiting with them.

a. Infants

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b. Toddlers

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c. Preschoolers

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12. Suggest an improvement that could be made to routines that would help to minimise distress when children are moving from one activity to another.

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4B Responding to emotions

Your response to the feelings children express may have a lasting impact on their long-term emotional stability. Parents rightfully expect all educators to support their child’s feelings, fears and responses to change.

Examples of positive and negative emotions are listed here.

| Positive emotions | Negative emotions |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| ▶ Enthusiasm | ▶ Hatred |
| ▶ Empathy | ▶ Grief |
| ▶ Happiness | ▶ Shame |
| ▶ Excitement | ▶ Anger |
| ▶ Curiosity | ▶ Fear |

Every individual experiences emotions to different degrees and may experience different emotions relating to the same event. In addition, some emotions are used as cues to communicate messages. Your response to these emotions and your demonstration of empathy is crucial; the way you respond can have a lasting effect and can influence a child’s self-esteem throughout their life.

Simple comments made to a child may affect their life. Your role as an educator has a profound effect on the children you care for. The way the day is planned and how tasks are implemented communicates messages to children about who they are and how others feel about them, so carefully consider your attitudes and interactions.

Example

An educator’s impact

Mandy is out for dinner with her friends celebrating the end of the year. In the past year, Mandy, who has been a stay-at-home mum for 25 years, found a position as an educator in a service that really values her abilities. She has also studied and finished her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Mandy is now commencing her Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, as her director told her she would love Mandy to be a room leader in the centre.

As Mandy tells her friends about her achievements and how much her colleagues value her input, she begins to cry. Mandy’s friends are worried that something is wrong. Mandy keeps saying she is okay, and eventually tells her friends that she is crying because she is so happy. She tells them that when she was in grade three, her teacher told her she was useless and that she would never amount to anything. This has always stuck in Mandy’s mind and kept her from trying new things. Now, at 48 years old, she has finally rid herself of her teacher’s negative comments.

Identifying children’s feelings

Feelings are identified and responded to through verbal interaction and body language. Body language is a way of communicating by using body movements, gestures and facial expressions to give more meaning to verbal communication.

Things you will commonly notice children do to indicate their feelings through body language are:

- ▶ frowning
- ▶ looking away
- ▶ looking down
- ▶ crossing arms
- ▶ facing their body away.

Sometimes reading body language is not as simple as it sounds, as cultural or individual circumstances may cause a child to display signs that you do not understand or that confuse you.

For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from many Asian cultures believe it is rude to make full eye contact, particularly if the person is older than they are. This means that children are expected to look away. However, some children avoid eye contact as they are shy or introverted, and it may be a sign of embarrassment.

At times, infants also try to express a feeling by crying to communicate with you. It may take some time for you to get to know each individual child and understand how they communicate their feelings.

Responding to children's feelings

Your prompt and open responses to the feelings children communicate will help them to feel respected. When you model this respect, you are encouraging children to communicate, listen to and treat others with respect. This encourages them to feel safe expressing their feelings in appropriate ways. This is an important part of a child's learning and emotional development.

Respect can be shown by:

- ▶ being positive
- ▶ developing trust
- ▶ listening
- ▶ being polite
- ▶ using empathy (showing concern)
- ▶ being a role model
- ▶ allowing children to try and encouraging their attempts
- ▶ accepting mistakes.

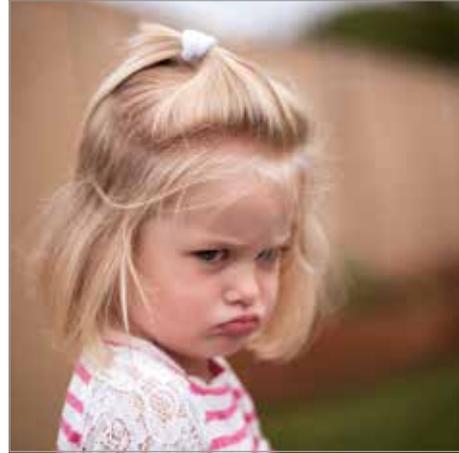
By responding to all feelings, you start building relationships with children and showing them that you care and that you listen to their communications. It is a myth that a child will become spoilt if you attend to them too much, as a child seeking your attention still requires time and understanding.

A child seeking attention and not receiving it may feel unworthy of love or become destructive in order to receive attention, as some children feel that negative attention from you is better than no attention at all.

Identifying uncharacteristic behaviours

Uncharacteristic behaviours are those that are unusual for the particular child. These include:

- ▶ excessive crying or tearfulness
- ▶ refusal to participate
- ▶ withdrawal
- ▶ irritability
- ▶ clinginess
- ▶ regression in development or abilities
- ▶ tantrums
- ▶ aggressive behaviour
- ▶ an increased need for comfort
- ▶ sensitivity to small changes.



At times these behaviours are expected; for example, a child who is new to the service may be clingy and sensitive to the change in environment.

When you witness uncharacteristic behaviour, you need to pay special attention to the child and attempt to identify the cause. Often, uncharacteristic behaviour is caused by illness or impending illness; however, other emotional issues may be involved, such as:

- ▶ family issues
- ▶ lack of sleep or rest
- ▶ peer or sibling problems
- ▶ managing change
- ▶ misunderstandings
- ▶ concern for others
- ▶ fears
- ▶ school problems
- ▶ the death of a pet.

After you have identified the cause of the uncharacteristic behaviour, you can then respond to the child. Some issues can be dealt with by your intervention and support. Others may require you to provide support and comfort to the child, provide an outlet through play, and be available to the child in times of need.

Ensure that you respond at all times in a manner that is appropriate to the child, and that you act consistently and ensure other children are not disturbed in the process.

For example, if one child becomes upset because another child has a toy he wants to play with, it is important to defuse the situation without disrupting the other child. If possible, provide the upset child with a toy the same as the other child's. If this is not possible, you could take the child to another play situation or toy and explain that he needs to wait until the other child has finished. It is never appropriate to take the toy from the other child and give it to the upset child just to calm him down, as this reinforces his behaviour. Your interest in the upset child's play will most likely encourage him to settle into a new activity.

Managing fear

Fear is a reflex at birth and develops in children as their brain function increases and their imagination and thought processes become more complex and abstract. Fear often occurs in children as the result of not understanding a situation or not being prepared for change.

The way fear is managed can affect the security and safety felt by a child, and may also reflect issues a child is experiencing, such as separating from their parent.

When your routine is stable and predictable, you can eliminate some fears that children may have, including fears relating to change and:

- ▶ what may happen next
- ▶ what is expected of them
- ▶ who will be caring for them
- ▶ when certain things may occur.

The following outlines a range of strategies you may find useful for managing fear. As fear is an emotion that affects individuals differently, your strategy for managing fear may vary.

| Strategy | How it helps |
|---|---|
| Anticipate fears and act to prevent them. | If you know that a child is afraid of something or someone, you may be able to prepare the child for the fear or, if possible, avoid it completely. |
| Remove the objects that cause the fear. | In many cases this is a simple task because the child may be afraid of a toy or noise. This strategy may be more difficult if the fear relates to a particular educator, all males, people with glasses or facial hair, or the actual room of care. |
| Prepare children for unpleasant times and events. | Children's lives may involve many unpleasant experiences; for example, moving rooms or changing educators. You can use the suggested experiences identified later in this topic to encourage emotional expression and to provide ways for children to find out more about what the experience involves. Be honest and tell the child accurate information, as telling children that an experience will be different from what it actually is may only make them more afraid once they undergo the experience. |
| Ensure routines are appropriate for the age and stage of the child, and provide a stable and predictable environment. | When routines are inflexible or materials and messages in the environment do not match a child's needs, the child may become fearful or distressed, and negative feelings may become a regular part of the day. |

Common causes of negative feelings

The most common negative feelings experienced by children are caused by:

- ▶ accidents
- ▶ other children
- ▶ the loss of a toy or having a toy taken from them
- ▶ embarrassment
- ▶ the environment being too noisy, crowded, large, busy, quiet or uninteresting.

Sometimes children are placed in situations that impact their emotional state as well as other developmental areas. These situations may include:

- ▶ long periods of hospitalisation – of a parent or the child
- ▶ care problems
- ▶ changes in family circumstances
- ▶ accidents that may occur during care
- ▶ separation from familiar people and places, including starting care
- ▶ family relationship issues
- ▶ difficult interactions with other children
- ▶ major changes, such as migration or loss of a loved one
- ▶ the death of a pet
- ▶ ill health
- ▶ embarrassing events.

Appropriate responses to negative feelings

The feelings that children express in relation to these situations must be dealt with appropriately and respectfully.

The children’s environment and your relationship with children must allow the expression of feelings, as suppressed feelings can lead to greater issues.

When children express feelings that show hurt or distress, you can respond using the following strategies.

| Strategy | Explanation |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Provide physical comfort | Comfort the child physically by sitting close to them, touching their arm, rubbing their back or giving them a hug. The child’s level of comfort with you, their age and their own personal space requirements dictate how close you should get. Also consider the appropriateness of your actions in relation to the issue to ensure your contact is not misunderstood. |
| Listen | Listen to what the child has to say. Avoid leading the child with specific questions; just respond with simple comments like, ‘Oh I understand’ or ‘Mmm’. This is called active listening. |
| Respond to feelings | If you recognise a specific feeling such as anger or frustration, say to the child, ‘You seem very angry.’ Use body language to show you are listening by facing the child and looking at them. |

| Strategy | Explanation |
|---|--|
| Problem-solve | Problem-solve in simple ways, but preferably by asking the child what they think they should do. This strategy depends on the age of the child, but brainstorming a resolution is a great way to resolve a negative feeling. |
| Provide comforters | Provide comforters to the child. They may have their own toy, blanket or dummy that they use when distressed, or you may offer them a special item that is available. |
| Redirect to new activities | <p>Redirect the child to new activities. It is unwise to redirect a child when they are extremely upset, but in many cases if you offer to move to a suitable activity, or you bring out something different or special, the child will happily move to a new feeling of comfort and enjoyment.</p> <p>Be sure to monitor this redirection and participate in the activity if you can to ensure the child is emotionally stable.</p> |
| Provide experiences relating to emotional expression | <p>Provide materials and equipment, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ water play to soothe and relax ▶ play dough for pounding and pushing ▶ a hammer and nails for hitting ▶ a swing for relaxing ▶ a pillow for cooling down or resting. <p>Set up relevant pretend play so that the child can play through their feelings, such as a home corner or a hospital.</p> <p>Use facial expressions to act out and release some tension; try angry faces, happy faces and sad faces, over-emphasising the emotions.</p> <p>Play soothing music.</p> <p>Provide time together, cuddles and a simple fun activity of any type.</p> <p>Get children to record a story about why they have the feelings they do; this might be a sound recording, series of photos, discussion, video or drawings.</p> |

Supporting emotional outbursts

Many issues concerning children are a result of them not understanding their feelings, not knowing that feelings are normal or dealing with feelings in inappropriate ways. For example, children may express anger inappropriately or with great force.

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

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

Different children will respond to different methods of calming them down. Some children need time to themselves away from others, some may need to sit, talk, problem-solve or express themselves to someone who is prepared to listen, and others may need to express their emotions physically.

You can cater for each of these calming methods in your environment, but you must also consider the safety of other children. It is sometimes appropriate for children to become emotional, but it is inappropriate for them to hurt others, damage the environment or attempt to leave your care.

Each person has different emotional needs. Emotional outbursts of anger are common for some children, just as emotional outbursts of fear or frustration, sadness or joy are common too.

Example

Expressing emotions

February: Dino crashes into the room with a scowl on his face so fierce that all the children who see him exit the area. He is crying and screaming as he stomps in. Amanda, the educator, is following him, calling out, 'Dino, I am talking to you. Come here and do what you are told!' Dino swears at Amanda as he punches at the door and then uses his arm to sweep the drawings from the table.

Cecelia, another educator, makes a space in the book corner and throws a few pillows on the floor. She points to the area and Dino goes to the space. She comes over, bends to his level and says, 'Dino, you are fine here, I will leave you to calm down'. Cecelia then tells Amanda that Dino is okay and that she can return outdoors.

Dino stays in the space, occasionally pushing the bookshelf with his feet. When he seems to have calmed down, Cecelia comes over and asks if he is okay. She talks to him about how he feels and listens to his story. She tells Dino that it is okay to be angry, but not okay to hurt others or damage things. They read a book together, then Cecelia gives him some ideas for how to manage his anger next time.

At the next staff meeting, the educators all talk about the event and agree that they will try Cecelia's calming method for a month to see if it makes a difference to Dino's frequent outbursts.

March: Dino is playing with Ling, who throws a ball that goes onto the roof of the building. Dino immediately scowls. He then turns to Amanda and says, 'I need to go to the cushions.' Amanda knows what this means, so she says, 'Okay, Dino!' Dino goes inside to the cushions and hides his face. Occasionally he gives the cushions a punch and can be heard growling into them. After a few minutes, Dino sits up. He gets up and goes back outdoors. Amanda asks if he is okay and congratulates him on how well he dealt with his anger. They then talk about how they will get the ball off the roof.

Dino needed time away from others to physically express anger safely and to talk to others about the problem once he had calmed down and was in control. The skill of dealing with his anger is a valuable one that Dino will be able to use throughout his childhood and into his adult life.

Practice task 9

1. What are some ways that children communicate their feelings? Include positive and negative feelings.

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2. Look at a service policy and identify any sections that relate to children's emotions. Write down what the policy says about how you should manage children's emotions.

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3. Write down one idea of how you could provide children with the opportunity to express their feelings.

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4. Write down one idea of a time when children could communicate, listen and treat others with respect.

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Summary

- ▶ Children need to be supported to deal with change.
- ▶ Routines should be meaningful and child-focused to help minimise distress when children are separating from their family.
- ▶ When separation times occur, you should be prepared to support the child to deal with change and to minimise distress.
- ▶ Show respect and respond to children's feelings openly.
- ▶ Assist children to identify their feelings and learn appropriate strategies for expression.
- ▶ When you communicate, listen and treat others with respect, children will follow your lead and do so as well.

Learning checkpoint 4

Helping children with change

1. Iona is three years old and is usually cheerful. However, recently she has been upset when her dad drops her off. Iona’s dad usually signs Iona in and says goodbye to her at the door.

a. What is the change you need to be concerned about?

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b. How could you adjust Iona’s routine to minimise her distress when her father leaves in the morning?

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c. How could you respond to Iona’s feelings of distress? Provide **three** ideas.

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d. How does Maslow’s hierarchy of needs relate to Iona and her needs?

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2. Troy is four years old and will be going into hospital soon to have a small operation.

a. What is the change you would focus on?

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b. How could you prepare Troy for the change?

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c. If Troy becomes upset, how could you respond?

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d. List **two** activities that would help Troy to express his feelings and emotions.

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e. List **two** activities that would encourage other children to communicate with Troy, listen to Troy's feelings and emotions, and learn about going into hospital.

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Topic 5

In this topic you will learn about:

5A Managing arrival times

5B Understanding and supporting separation

Settling new arrivals

Arrivals and departures can be key times to build relationships with parents. However, at these times you may encounter emotional challenges, both with parents and their children. You will need to meet the needs of new children and families in your service, and ensure current children and families are made to feel welcome.

The ways you manage separation, separation anxiety, attachment relationships and orientation processes also influence the success of the relationships you form.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

| 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 | |
| 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 |

5A Managing arrival times

The routines that occur during busy arrival and departure times should be flexible so that you can acknowledge, talk to and support families.

Effective management of arrival times means:

- ▶ following a responsive arrival time routine
- ▶ encouraging relaxed and unhurried separation
- ▶ observing families for signs of distress.



Arrival time routines

A routine arrival process prepares the child for separation. Interaction with the child should begin while parents are still present. On arrival, warmly welcome both parent and child, and acknowledge the family in an individual way. The routine should be flexible and should allow you to acknowledge, talk to and support families. Settle the child into an activity they enjoy before the parent leaves. This unhurried approach enables each child and parent to manage the transition calmly and allows you to gather information.

A parent may find it difficult to leave their child, but they may also find it difficult if their child shows no signs of distress upon separation.

As an educator, you must provide reassurance to the parent that both these responses are common and expected. Through this supportive and respectful communication, parents will develop a relationship of trust with you and they will feel increasingly at ease leaving their child.

Watch this video to learn more about supporting parents during arrival times.



Responsive arrival time routines

A responsive arrival time routine is about taking time to ensure you are welcoming everyone, gathering information about family needs and allowing for active participation of children and their families. Responsive and child-centred arrival time routines help to minimise the distress of children and parents when they are separating.

The following table shows an example of a responsive routine. The order of these steps may vary depending on individual situations, but the basic points should still be covered in all situations.

- 1 Welcome on arrival** An educator approaches and gives a warm welcome to say hello to the parent and the child. To show respect and communicate clearly, you should move to the child's level by sitting, kneeling or crouching when you are speaking to them.
- 2 Individually acknowledge the family** The educator acknowledges the family in an individual way. There are a number of situations that could occur at this point, all relating to individual circumstances. For example, you may make a comment to the child or parent about:

 - ▶ something they have brought into care
 - ▶ an event you know that they are attending
 - ▶ an activity you have set up for the child
 - ▶ an activity you think the child may be interested in
 - ▶ other individual situations.
- 3 Settle the child into an activity** Ensure the child is settled into an activity. This may be one the child chooses or one the educator or parent suggests. If possible, stay with the child until the parent leaves. Sometimes this is difficult as other children are also arriving, and sometimes it is inappropriate because the child may yell out, 'Goodbye' and take off to play.
- 4 Commence interaction early** Interaction with the child commences early in the welcoming process. It is vital that you initiate contact with the child as early as possible to ensure that separation is gradual, and both parent and child feel ready to separate.
- 5 Establish parent's plans** Establish what the parent's plans are. This is a good time to find out whether the parent wants to exchange information and leave, or whether they would like to stay for a while. If the parent wants to stay, be sure to support and encourage this choice.
- 6 Exchange information about the child** Exchange information about the child to ensure the parent's needs are being met during the day and that you are aware of what has been happening at home in relation to the child's routines and other needs. For an infant, you usually gather routine information and details of how the child is reacting emotionally on the day. The older the child, the more interest-focused your exchange will be.
- 7 Establish a goodbye routine** A goodbye routine is usually individual to the family. Some parents already have an established goodbye strategy, while others are not sure how to do this effectively. Culture may also have an influence; some families may be physical with their children, giving hugs and kisses, while others may be more verbal, simply saying goodbye. Your suggestions should meet what you think the family requires; most goodbye rituals include a goodbye, a hug and/or kiss, and an indication of when the parent is expected to return.
- 8 Reassure the child** If a child is distressed, you may need to hug them and wave to the parent through a window. Remember to acknowledge the child's feelings and reassure them that everything is fine by making a comment like, 'I know you are sad that Mum is leaving, but she'll be back later'.

9

Reassure the parent

If the parent is distressed, you may need to offer suggestions for support, such as having a coffee in the staffroom before leaving, going with a staff member to have a chat or cry, calling the service later to find out how their child is doing or using a support service if the situation relates to family distress.

Some signs that a parent is distressed include:

- ▶ obvious emotions like crying
- ▶ checking over and over that you understand what their child needs
- ▶ watching for a long time after they have said goodbye
- ▶ calling or contacting you frequently to check on their child.

10

Farewell the parent

Say goodbye to the parent. If the parent and child are comfortable with the goodbye ritual and have been reassured if needed, they will separate well and move into their daily routines.

Encouraging relaxed and unhurried separation

Arrival and departure times are often very busy and demanding as you attempt to satisfy the needs of family members, and cater for children who are already present. Parents often use these busy times to gain an impression of you and the service, and may use what they see and how you interact with them as evidence of how the entire day will proceed.

A staff member should promptly attend to each child or parent who enters the service. Part of your role is to assist during arrival and departure times. Be aware that parents and children may have different feelings about separation. Sometimes, a parent may be more anxious or concerned about their departure than the child is, and may require support and reassurance during this time.

Encourage parents to stay and participate as long as they want to. This may involve having a parent stay for an hour on the first day and then decreasing the time they stay each day. This helps parents feel confident that their child is being cared for, and gives you the opportunity to observe and react to any signs of distress from the parent or child. Parents should also be encouraged to call the service to check on their child if necessary.

Many parents and children find separation quite stressful and upsetting, so remember to show empathy and acknowledge their feelings and reactions as expected responses. If distress is evident, you must provide support to the parent. Parents may be managing a range of tasks that you are unaware of. The key is to be non-judgmental and to accept parents' strengths and weaknesses.

Watch this video to learn more about separation anxiety.



The following outlines examples of a positive and negative arrival experience.

Example: Negative arrival experience

After a very encouraging orientation process, Alison takes Jason, her three-year-old son, to care for the first time. When Alison arrives, they are not approached by any staff members. Alison finds this rude and is extremely concerned that Jason may not be cared for properly and that staff members may not speak to him much during the day.

As Jason is a bit anxious, Alison stays for a while to get him interested in activities before she leaves, but she feels that ultimately this should be the job of the staff members. Alison becomes angry that the orientation she had experienced and what she had been told about the centre and the caring and attentive staff doesn't seem to be true. She decides to withdraw Jason from the service and try somewhere she feels the staff are honest, attentive and more concerned for her son's wellbeing.

Example: Positive arrival experience

After a very encouraging orientation process, Alison takes Jason, her three-year-old son, to care for the first time. They arrive in the room and are approached by a staff member who welcomes them both. The other staff members, who are obviously busy, look up and say, 'Hello', giving a wave.

The educator who welcomes them moves down to Jason's level, saying, 'Hello Jason!' She then looks up and says, 'Hi Alison. How are you?' Jason immediately begins telling the educator about the car he has at home and she responds by telling him they have a car mat and box of cars out today. They all walk toward a play mat where the educator sits with Jason. Alison sits down too and they talk about how Jason had a long sleep yesterday and that he didn't eat much breakfast, so he may be hungry at snack time. After a short while, Alison tells Jason that it's time for her to go. The educator suggests that Jason gives his mother a hug and a kiss, and then they all say goodbye and wave as Alison leaves.

These examples demonstrate two very different ways that arrivals can occur in a service. The first shows how a lack of communication can lead to a breakdown in relationships. It is fair and reasonable to expect parents to want to leave their children with people who:

- ▶ they trust
- ▶ show they know what they are doing
- ▶ are confident in their job
- ▶ communicate with them about their needs and the needs of their child
- ▶ take responsibility for these things and form relationships with all families.

Signs of distress

Some parents may be difficult to manage or communicate with. However, it is your role to ensure that all parents see that you care about the same things they do – the wellbeing of their child and the needs of the family.

It is expected that, at some stage, all children will experience anxiety at being separated from their parent or primary caregiver. This is a common response and may be due to the child's developmental stage. However, the onset of anxiety may also be out of character for a child and indicate that there are other issues you should consider.

Common signs of distress a child may display include:

- ▶ withdrawal
- ▶ aggression
- ▶ crying
- ▶ other behaviour that is out of character.

Reassuring the child

The strategies to settle a child with separation anxiety are very similar to those you would use when a child displays other kinds of emotional upset. Remember to stay calm and reassure the child.

To settle a child with separation anxiety, you can use strategies such as:

- ▶ physically comforting the child with a hug or a rub on the back, arm or shoulder
- ▶ listening to the child
- ▶ talking to the child
- ▶ providing comforters to relax the child
- ▶ redirecting or distracting the child with another activity
- ▶ using a transition action.

It is also essential to ensure that parents say goodbye to their child before they leave, as a child who suddenly notices the absence of their primary caregiver will be more afraid and upset than a child who is just sad when saying goodbye.

Watch this video for more about managing separation.



Practice task 10

Describe the routines of a service arrival time you have experienced. Provide one idea to improve this arrival time.

5B Understanding and supporting separation

Part of separation anxiety is related to the attachments children develop. Children and infants form attachments with a number of people, especially with their primary caregiver, with whom the attachment is the strongest. Any number of other attachments may follow.

A primary caregiver is the person who most often cares for the child, providing for their physical and emotional needs consistently and responsively. This person is usually a parent or guardian.

Other attachments are also important for a child's social and emotional development, and it is expected that as each child commences care, educators begin to develop an attachment relationship.



Attachment relationships

Attachment relationships may be demonstrated in a number of ways. Young children, in particular, may demonstrate the attachment behaviours set out in the following table.

| Attachment behaviour | How it is demonstrated by the child |
|---------------------------|---|
| Social referencing | The child watches the emotional response and responds in a similar way to an educator they are attached to. For example, if a spider is crawling on the wall, the child may copy the response of the educator. If the educator screams, the child will scream; if the educator says, 'Hey, look how many legs it has! How interesting!' the child will show interest. |
| Anchoring | The child moves off to explore, but not too far from the educator they are attached to. The child ensures this educator is within close proximity just in case, and may be confused and concerned if they move away unexpectedly. |
| Refuelling | The child periodically returns to the educator they are attached to with a toy or activity, or just to make sure they are still there. The child may also return to the educator when frightened, hurt or upset. |

Observing these attachment behaviours allows you to identify how well you have developed relationships with the children. You will also begin to understand what a child who is attached to you requires.

Using transition actions

Some children approach new people with great confidence and ease; however, others may need time to warm to and get to know the new person before they interact. When you first meet a new child, some will make eye contact with you and will be happy to be close to you, while others will keep their distance and turn their faces from you. To help break down a barrier between you and a child, you can use a special toy or ritual. This is called using a transition action.

A transition action involves using something other than yourself to gain the child's interest and attention. The use of a transition action is a pleasurable experience for the child, so they will link it with you, and slowly become familiar and comfortable with you.

You can determine what may work as a transition action by asking the parent or watching what activities the child does in the room. Transition actions are often a link between the care and home environment. You should consider the stage of development and the types of interests that are common to this age and stage of development.

Transition actions can be used to help an infant settle into a service and develop attachment relationships. Sometimes you might need assistance in recognising a transition action.

Example

Transition actions for different age groups

Nine months

Lena (nine months) has been in care for a few weeks and is not at all settled. She cries for most of the day, and screams during feeding and when her nappy is being changed. Her educators are very concerned that they are not developing a healthy relationship with Lena and that she isn't receiving the calm and stimulating care they like to provide.

During orientation, Lena's mum was very clear that Lena spends a lot of time in her pram and feels comfortable there if they leave her to play in it. The educators felt this was an inappropriate situation and that Lena was being deprived of appropriate developmental activity. They have been taking Lena out of the pram, but soon find that Lena will only settle if she is held or carried. This is not possible in the busy room.

As the educators are unsure of what to do, they call in an outside support person, Amy, to assist with the situation. Amy asks to look at all the information that had been collected from the parents, and speaks with Lena's mum. Amy asks Lena's mum about the significance of the pram. Lena's mum says that she is really busy working from home and so Lena has always stayed in the pram. This way she can move from room to room and place to place with her, and they can talk and play as they go. She says if they stay in one room or place for a period of time, Lena comes out of the pram and plays on the floor. Amy notes that Lena can crawl and walks by holding onto furniture, so her physical development is age-appropriate and of no concern.

Amy immediately knows what to do and suggests the educators use the pram as part of a transition action. While in care, Lena can eat, sleep, play and be changed (if possible) in the pram until she has developed a relationship with her main educator in the room.

The educators in Lena's room try this approach and, within a week, Lena forms an attachment to an educator. The following week she plays beside her pram, and the week after she is 'pram free'.

18 months

Anita (18 months) is visiting a new service with her mum as part of the orientation program. The educator, Nicholas, observed in the last two visits that Anita is fine with him talking to her mum, but that she gets a bit clingy if he speaks directly to her. Nicholas plans to use a transition action on Anita's next visit to see how it assists their relationship.

Once Anita has settled in for a while with her mum, Nicholas brings over an animal set to show Anita. He sits nearby, but not too close, and starts to play with the animals. He knows that Anita loves animals, so he makes some quiet animal noises as he plays. After a few moments Anita comes over, sits near Nicholas and they play with the animals together for some time.

The next day, Nicholas has the farm set up and shows Anita as soon as she arrives. He sits with her and they play with the animals together while her mum sits apart from them.

Practice task 11

Complete the sentences by selecting the appropriate words from the list.

| | |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| crying | clinginess |
| easier | transition actions |
| annoying | activities they enjoy |
| harder for me | ignore |
| stop | separation routines |
| laughing | star charts |
| discourage | a timer |
| encourage | aggression |
| unrealistic | |

1. Families and children may show signs of distress at separation. Two things that might tell me this is happening are _____ and _____.
2. When children are distressed at separation, I use these two ideas:
_____ and _____.
3. When I begin interacting with children as soon as they arrive, their separation is _____.
4. When parents want to stay for long periods when they drop their child off, I _____ them.

Summary

- ▶ Families and children may become distressed on arrival.
- ▶ Observe signs of distress so you can implement support strategies if required.
- ▶ To reduce the abruptness of a separation, interact with children early; a timely interaction occurs while the family is still present.
- ▶ Encourage families to take time at arrival to create a relaxed and unhurried separation.
- ▶ Use a calm, reassuring manner to respond to a child's separation distress.

Learning checkpoint 5

Settling new arrivals

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

Case study

Nella (three years) has arrived at your service. She is clinging tightly to her mother's leg. When you approach, Nella yells, 'No!'

Nella's mother tells you that Nella doesn't want to come today as she says she isn't tired and that she doesn't want to have a sleep today.

1. What signs of distress do you notice?

.....

.....

2. How could you help Nella experience a positive separation?

a. List **two** things you could do immediately.

.....

.....

b. List **two** things you could do for future separations.

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