

CHCECE036

Provide experiences to support children's play and learning

I am going to
and I know
ride my
bike. I
have my
the
doll



Learner Guide



Updated to include
National Quality
Framework changes



CHCECE036

Provide experiences to support children's play and learning

Release 1

Learner Guide

Aspire Version 2.1



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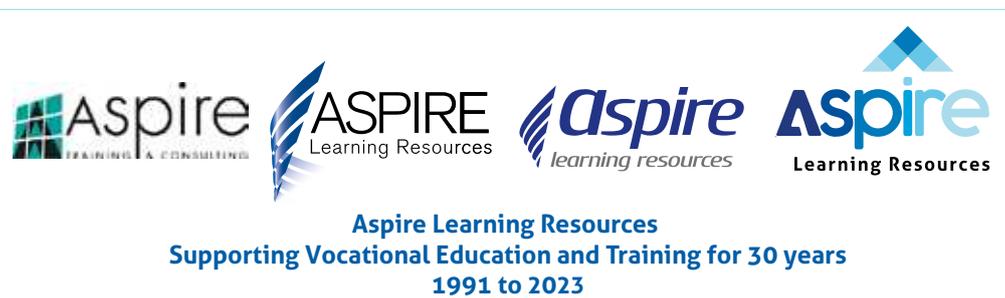
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Before you begin

This Learner Guide is based on the unit of competency *CHCECE036 Provide experiences to support children's play and learning*, Release 1.

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

How to work through this Learner Guide

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

Feature of the Learner Guide	How you can use each feature
Learning content	<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 action. Your trainer will tell you which Practice Tasks to complete.
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 activities to complete. These activities give you an opportunity to check your progress and apply the skills and knowledge you have learnt.

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

T = Topic

Topics	National Quality Standard (NQS)
T1–T3	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
T2	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
T2	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
T2	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
T3	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
T1, T3	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
	Partnerships
T1	Respect for diversity
	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives
T1, T3	Equity, inclusion and high expectations
	Sustainability
T1, T3	Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning
	Collaborative leadership and teamwork
	Practice
T1, T3	Holistic, integrated and interconnected approaches
T3	Responsiveness to children
T1, T3	Play-based learning and intentionality
T1, T3	Learning environments
T1	Cultural responsiveness
	Continuity of learning and transitions
T1, T3	Assessment and evaluation for learning, development and wellbeing
	Learning Outcomes
T3	1. Children have a strong sense of identity
T3	2. Children are connected to and contribute to their world
T3	3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
T3	4. Children are confident and involved learners
T3	5. Children are effective communicators



Topic 1

In this topic you will learn about:

- 1A** Understanding the value of play
- 1B** Developing a sense of belonging

Creating an environment for play

As an educator, you should understand the value of play and how it influences the way you work with children.

To do this, you should consider what play is, the purpose of play, how play influences development, and other theories that are relevant to learning and development.

Children feel a sense of belonging and ownership when they are involved in decisions relating to activities and experiences that support their play.

1A Understanding the value of play

Play contributes to every area of a child's development.

When you show respect for children's ideas for play, you provide an environment that allows healthy learning and development. Children learn about themselves and the world around them through play.



Play can be a valuable way of increasing a child's learning and development.

Definitions of play

Free play is child-directed and occurs naturally.

It often lacks structure, meaning that it changes and adapts to suit different situations. The dynamics of play alter based on the children involved and the ideas and materials that are available.

Children's free play involves the following aspects.

Fun

Children show that they enjoy being involved in play and that they wish to continue playing.

Free choice

Children participate in the experience and are not forced to enter the activity; the desire to play comes from the child.

Active participation

Children are engaged in the activity and are part of the action that the play situation involves; for example, sitting watching television may be enjoyable, but there is no active participation.

Play for the sake of play

Play is the process that children are involved in; they do not consider the activity's purpose or goal.

Control

Children take control of entering and participating in a play experience; an adult does not direct it.

Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (EYLF) and the National Quality Standard (NQS) are all based on play-based learning. This means that children learn and make sense of themselves and their world during their play.

The EYLF and NQS, along with their foundation theories, are linked to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – Article 31, which states that play is a child's right.

Play-based learning differs from free play due to educator input. Free play involves children choosing what they would like to do and what materials they would like to use with no direction, structure or preparation. Play-based learning involves an educator, with families, finding out about each child and supporting them by:

- setting up a physical environment to provoke and invite exploration, learning and inquiry
- providing a secure, warm and trusting space
- allowing for safe exploration and risk taking
- knowing when to allow free play and when to provide intentional teaching
- planning to make adequate time, space, materials, equipment and people available.

How children learn

Children learn from play. They learn most when they are interested in play and in engaging with the educators.

People have different learning styles that influence the way they process and make sense of information. The three main learning styles are visual, auditory and kinaesthetic.

Visual

A child who prefers a visual learning style learns more effectively with pictures, images, reading, demonstrations, seeing and looking.

Auditory

A child who prefers an auditory learning style learns more effectively by listening so they can participate in discussions, role-play and talking.

Kinaesthetic

A child who prefers a kinaesthetic learning style learns more effectively by observing and then using hands-on experiences, touch and gestures to copy the behaviour.

Play and culture

Play is viewed in different ways within various cultures.

A common variation is that some cultures believe that children learn through play and others that play is an activity separate to learning. The following may also be noticed as contrasting expectations of play.

Contrasting expectations of play

- | | |
|---|---|
| ➤ Children play freely and unsupervised within their community. | ➤ Children are supervised at all times. |
| ➤ Toys dominate play. | ➤ Technology and screen time dominate play. |
| ➤ Play is a group activity. | ➤ Play is an individual activity. |
| ➤ Nature forms the play materials. | ➤ Too much play is a waste of time and learning should be structured. |

Development outcomes

The areas, resources and materials you provide for different types of play influence how children interact with and explore the environment.

How children interact is determined by their learning style and by their interests and abilities. The learning that occurs through play is called 'play-based learning'. Play-based learning encourages many aspects of a child's development, including:

- physical development
- social, emotional and moral development
- cognitive, creative and communication development

Physical development

During the first few years of life, children's fine and gross motor skills increase rapidly.

Children develop from helpless infants into active toddlers who can crawl, balance, walk, run, climb, swing and jump. At each stage of physical development, a child first masters a movement, then builds on it and practises until satisfied, before moving on to learn something new.

As well as building skills children have mastered, play enables them to use their bodies in many new and challenging ways. These are related to children's fundamental movement skills, which include:

- body management skills – involving balance
- locomotor skills – involving moving the body in a direction
- object control skills – involving holding and using objects.

Here are examples of each.

Body management skills	Locomotor skills	Object control skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bending ➤ Swinging ➤ Climbing ➤ Lifting ➤ Reaching ➤ Standing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Skipping ➤ Jumping ➤ Running ➤ Hopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Throwing ➤ Catching ➤ Batting ➤ Kicking ➤ Shovelling ➤ Grasping

Physical activities assist children to:

- develop strength and stamina
- release excess energy
- learn hand-eye coordination.

Social, emotional and moral development

Children develop many skills through play. They face situations where they learn to collaborate, choose experiences, make decisions, and experience failure and success.

By observing children at play, you can gain a sense of how play impacts a child's self-esteem, independence and sense of achievement. Play helps children to understand more about others and themselves, including their emotions, fears, joys and frustrations, and how they and others express themselves.

Pretend play assists children to explore the world of feelings and relationships. By playing out situations with others, children can come to terms with their world, particularly if they do not understand certain experiences.

Morally, children learn what is right and wrong through play, how to treat others fairly and what it is like to be treated unfairly. They also learn about their community, conservation and the environment as they share stories with others.

Children might practise social skills through play such as:

- taking turns
- sharing
- negotiating
- cooperating and collaborating
- setting rules and guidelines.

Play can assist children to learn to accept and value all people, particularly those who may appear different from themselves. It can also assist children to learn positive attitudes of acceptance and respect for different people.

You can support this learning by:

- creating a play environment that reflects many different kinds of people and different ways of living
- arranging play settings that promote participation of boys and girls, children with disabilities, and children from various cultural backgrounds
- challenging any behaviour that alerts you to negative attitudes that may be developing in children; for example, if a child refuses to include another child in play because of their appearance or physical ability, you should intervene in this situation and provide support for both children
- involving parents in any issues that centre on children's play.

Cognitive, creative and communication development

Communication begins at birth; infants cry to express their needs, coo to the sounds of a human voice and respond to any attention they are given.

Through their play and interactions with others, children begin to learn about what communication is. They develop words, progress to forming sentences, and learn about tone of voice and other language skills.

As these language skills increase, children are able to express new concepts, and develop new ideas and actions. They use words and phrases such as 'under', 'in front of', 'bigger' and 'smaller', and questions and comments like: 'Can I fit through that space?', 'How far can I jump?' and 'My hand is bigger than yours!'

New forms of language emerge as children expand their verbal skills and develop an ability to use written language. As their understanding and use of language grows, children express fun and serious ideas, use formal or correct language, and later add informal or slang terms. When children use made-up words and are creative in the way they speak, it demonstrates that they have a strong grasp of how language works.

Play enables children to develop their cognitive skills and begin to grasp ideas or concepts such as:

- same and different
- sorting and classifying (which things belong together)
- ordering or sequencing (what comes first, second, third, etc.)
- cause and effect (if I do this, then that happens)
- problem-solving and decision-making
- negotiating
- controlling their environment.

Play experiences that encourage children to be creative and express themselves include:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| ➤ drawing | ➤ finger painting |
| ➤ painting | ➤ creating a collage |
| ➤ using play dough | ➤ using blocks |
| ➤ moulding clay | ➤ trying woodwork. |

During creative experiences, the focus should be on enjoying the process itself, rather than the outcome or end product.

Theories about play

Since the 19th Century, various theories have emerged about how play influences a child's development.

Some theories and practices about play that are important to the EYLF and NQS are linked to the history of play and understanding of the importance of learning during childhood. These are included in the following table.

Theorist	Historical event	Application
Froebel (1782–1852)	In 1837 the first kindergarten was opened.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Play is an important route to learning. ➤ Play and activity, through use of nature, teaches children to learn, observe, reason, express and create through play.
Montessori (1870–1952)	In 1907 the first Montessori school was opened.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Play is the child's work. ➤ Play that is linked with sensory activity, and cognitive, social and emotional experiences provides optimum brain development. ➤ Active learning at the child's pace can develop cooperation and independence. ➤ Children are constantly learning in their everyday lives.
Steiner (1861–1925)	In 1919 the first Steiner school was opened.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children need play in order to develop. ➤ Children need to use their imagination and to create. ➤ Natural materials should be used where possible to enhance natural play and develop a sense of beauty and care. ➤ A love of lifelong learning can be built in early childhood. ➤ Moral and ethical abilities and the development of resilience can be supported to grow in early childhood.
Parten (1902–1970)	In 1929 Parten's theory was introduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Play has stages that involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – solitary play – parallel play – associative play – cooperative play – play with rules – unoccupied play – onlooker play.

Theorist	Historical event	Key concepts
Piaget (1896–1980)	In 1936 Piaget's theory was introduced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children are active learners. ➤ At each stage and age, children will use materials and learn differently. ➤ Children need to repeat activities over and over to practise skills and learn different things. ➤ Learning should be built around children's interests. ➤ Intelligence is not just an inborn trait, the environment can contribute. ➤ Children develop skills and this helps them to learn.
Vygotsky (1896–1934)	<p>In 1926 Vygotsky's theory was introduced.</p> <p>In 1962 Vygotsky's theory was translated into English and became important in our understanding of children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Play stimulates thinking. ➤ Through play, children take on different roles and try out different ways to communicate. ➤ Play allows children to develop language and reasoning skills. ➤ Children's social learning comes before development.
Malaguzzi (1920–1994)	<p>Following World War II a group of women raised money to set up a school where they hoped they could teach children tolerance, justice and equality.</p> <p>This inspired Malaguzzi and in 1963 the first Reggio Emilia preschool was opened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Known as the Reggio Emilia approach, the focus is on the importance of the environment. ➤ Children learn through play. ➤ Play is essential to a child's wellbeing. ➤ Play is a method that allows both children and educators to learn. ➤ Both children and adults should work together to create the learning process.

Pedagogical practices

Pedagogy refers to the actions you put into place to provide play and learning for children.

A service as a whole demonstrates this pedagogy through its philosophy. To develop your pedagogical approach, you will reflect on and choose your beliefs based on what you learn about. These include:

- quality play
- theories of play
- play and culture
- role of play in development.

Within the National Quality Framework (NQF), the following components also guide your pedagogy.

NQF component	Requirement	Expectation
Education and Care Services National Law	Section 168 – Offence relating to required programs	A program of experiences must be delivered to each child.
Education and Care Services National Regulations	Regulation 73 – Educational program Regulation 75 – Information about educational program to be kept available	A program of experiences must be delivered to each child and available at all times.
	Regulation 74 – Documenting of child assessments or evaluations for delivery of educational program	Reflection must occur around each child’s wellbeing, learning and development in language that is easily understandable by families and others.
National Quality Standard (NQS) Quality Area 1 Educational program and practice	Standard 1.1 – The educational program enhances each child’s learning and development	The program and routines must contribute to and provide opportunities for each child’s learning and development, and reflect their current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities and interests.
	Standard 1.2 – Educators facilitate and extend each child’s learning and development	Educators must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ be deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful in their decisions ➤ respond to children’s ideas and play ➤ extend children’s learning and promote their agency.
	Standard 1.3 – Educators and coordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child	Each child’s learning and development should be assessed and reflected on. Individual children and groups of children should drive the program.

NQF component	Requirement	Expectation
EYLF	Principle: Ongoing learning and reflective practice	Educators should constantly build their knowledge through reflection.
	Principle: High expectations and equity	Educators should hold high expectations for achievement and support children to succeed in their challenges.
	Practice: Holistic approaches	Children's minds, bodies and spirits are all connected. Educators need to take care of each child's physical, personal, social, emotional, cognitive and cultural needs.
	Practice: Learning through play	Play provides opportunities for discovery, creation, improvising and imagining.
	Practice: Intentional teaching	Learning occurs through discussion and conversation.
	Practice: Learning environments	Welcoming spaces enrich the lives of children and respond to their interests and needs.
	Practice: Assessment for learning	The process of gathering and reflecting on information about children helps educators to create suitable learning and development opportunities.

When you use these types of guidelines and think about your pedagogy, you are demonstrating reflective practice. This is a form of ongoing learning where you reflect on what is happening and how you can change it to improve the environment and outcomes for children.

When you use teamwork and collaboration to deliver consistent pedagogy, you will enhance children's play.

Example

Development through play

Cynda, an early childhood educator, has set up play dough on the table. She has also provided a range of items:

- a rolling pin
- biscuit cutters
- scissors
- a collection of coloured pebbles and feathers.

The children working with the play dough demonstrate different aspects of development.

Development	Abilities
Physical development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Rolling ➤ Pounding ➤ Cutting ➤ Moulding
Social, emotional and moral development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Talking about their work ➤ Sharing play dough and materials with others ➤ Creating pretend play scenarios ➤ Discussing their work with others ➤ Manipulating the dough to match the emotion felt; for example, pounding out anger, squeezing the dough for stress release, etc.
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Planning what to create ➤ Working out how to represent ideas
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Telling others about their creations ➤ Chatting while working
Spiritual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Thinking about the play dough and its origin ➤ Connecting with the activity and thinking about how it feels to work with the dough
Creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Imagining how to use the materials ➤ Creating an idea ➤ Manipulating the dough to the shapes desired



Practice Task 1

1. Draw a line to match the theorist and the key concepts of play.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| * Montessori (1870-1952) | * Play has distinct stages |
| * Steiner (1861-1925) | * Play is the work of a child. |
| * Parten (1902-1970) | * The Reggio Emilia approach focuses on importance of environment. |
| * Malaguzzi (1920-1994) | * Uses natural materials to enhance play. Children need to be creative and use their imagination and play is needed to develop. |

2. Children are playing together in the home corner. They each have a role.

Draw a line to match each action to the development outcome that most closely relates to the learning taking place.

- | | |
|--|---|
| * Social, emotional and moral development | * Children are grasping objects such as cups, knives and saucepans. |
| * Physical development and fundamental movement skills | * Children help each other to prepare the meal. They organise roles and what they should be doing. |
| * Creative development | * The saucepan handle falls off and the children are not sure how to fix it. They problem-solve to decide on their actions. |
| * Cognitive and communication development | * The children design a menu. Each of the meals is drawn and made into a book. |

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

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a. Children have different learning styles. These influence their understanding of what educators need from them to give them quality play experiences. | * Yes | * No |
| b. Standard 1.3 of the NQS encourages educators to work in teams and to collaborate to enhance play experiences. | * Yes | * No |
| c. Play-based learning encourages many aspects of a child's development. Educators support the children by creating environments that are responsive to their strengths and interests. | * Yes | * No |
| d. Fundamental movement skills are skills educators develop so they can provide for children's ideas for play based on their interests and abilities. | * Yes | * No |
| e. Play is the same across the world. Children all play the same and learn the same things from play. | * Yes | * No |
| f. Play-based learning always has a goal, and educators should insist children participate in all types of play. | * Yes | * No |
| g. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the EYLF and NQS all identify a child's right to play and the belief that free play and play-based learning are valuable. | * Yes | * No |
| h. Pedagogy that is centred around the EYLF and NQS will follow theories of play and demonstrates reflective practice. A service usually reflects this through its philosophy. | * Yes | * No |

1B Developing a sense of belonging

Each child approaches their play experience with a unique set of beliefs and values.

These are worked through as they play with their peers and experience the differences and similarities between themselves and others. These abilities might be affected by how long the child has been attending an education and care service. When you provide for the child's needs and help them to understand their similarities and differences, you assist them to feel a sense of belonging. When you allow children to make choices and to influence their environment, you are encouraging their agency. Agency is about feeling a sense of control and that you have choices.



Children develop a sense of belonging and social skills through play.

Children's play reflects who they are becoming in terms of their:

- cultural experiences
- temperament
- interests
- communication style
- personality
- abilities
- level of social skills.

Children feel belonging as well as ownership when they are involved in decisions relating to activities and experiences. You may discuss ways to change activities to suit a child's needs or interests, or you may use their opinions to encourage others to participate.

Play and inclusion

Because play has such a significant social value, the play environment must reflect the many different lifestyles and people who make up society.

Think about children's individual needs when preparing play environments.

Children's individual needs might relate to their:

- race and culture
- gender
- age
- interests and preferences
- social context and lifestyle
- communication style
- personality
- length of time attending the service
- abilities.

To provide play and physical activities that reflect the cultural diversity, gender and abilities of children, you should make sure that:

- there are no stereotypical or inaccurate materials that provide limited ideas of gender roles
- resources and their content reflect everyday differences and similarities, such as dolls that reflect different cultural backgrounds, and books and photos that reflect a broad range of people, abilities and lifestyles
- each child's cultural or other differences are reflected in the environment
- all children are given respect and encouraged to participate.

Accepting differences

All children have differences, including additional support needs. It is the difference in developmental area and level of need that makes them individual.

The following table outlines how you can support children and encourage them to accept differences in themselves and others.

Gender differences

To encourage children to accept gender differences, you should:

- avoid labelling a particular activity as best suited to boys or girls
- be aware that boys and girls often play differently from each other
- encourage all genders to participate in all areas of play in the environment that you set up; for example, encourage boys to dress up, girls to engage in messy play and initiate spontaneous interactions with all children in the group
- avoid splitting the group into 'boys and girls'.

Cultural and racial differences

Children's family culture and racial differences and backgrounds can be supported by:

- respecting all cultures
- allowing children to use play that depicts their culture through role-playing, modelling or by using their familiar language
- being sensitive to the values, cultures and attitudes of some families in your service; you may need to make compromises if your attitudes are different
- being aware of children's backgrounds and, if possible, incorporating resources that are relevant to the curriculum; for example, cookware from a particular culture for the home corner, cultural dress for dress-ups, dolls with a variety of skin colours, or musical instruments from different cultures for music time
- including cultural resources as part of the day-to-day environment
- realistically depicting things that are relevant to children to assist them to feel valued and that they belong
- continually educating yourself about aspects of the children's lives outside the service
- avoiding stereotyping; everyone is unique and has their own needs and interests
- including special occasions that some or all children participate in.

Additional support needs

To assist with children's need to play and socialise, you should:

- include children in all types of play for all aspects of development
- participate in play to show other children ways to include and encourage interactions
- provide specific equipment or an environment to ensure success
- follow any individual programs that have been developed by a specialist service
- incorporate children's individual programs or objectives into the overall program to provide an inclusive experience
- encourage a range of children to participate in activities, including those specified by specialist services.

Choosing not to participate

When you plan to introduce a new activity or experience, it is common for children to stand back and watch prior to participating.

Be ready for this by preparing some things you might say or do to allow the children to understand what the experience is all about and how they can participate.

Some children will make the decision not to participate in a play situation or experience even if it is familiar. The following table provides some reasons for this.

Reason	Explanation
A momentary decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The child may simply wish to have solitary time or to observe others participating. ➤ A child may make the decision to observe what will happen before they participate, particularly in a new experience.
The result of an event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The child may be experiencing feelings of anxiety due to past failure and a lack of confidence. ➤ They may be enthusiastic to watch as they enjoyed doing this previously.
An ongoing decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The child feels positively about not participating or is not interested in the activity or experience.
An ongoing difficulty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The child lacks competence or confidence, or feels uncomfortable with particular peers or activities and experiences.

In a situation where children make the decision not to participate, it is your responsibility to:

- respect their decision
- offer simple suggestions and choices without pressuring the child
- respect the child's final decision
- identify why the child may not wish to participate
- consider providing support if the child is having difficulty or has experienced a negative situation
- respond to a child's reasoning with acceptance if it is part of the child's personality.

When you are respectful of a child's choice not to participate, you are respecting them and this increases their feeling of belonging.

Example

Including all children to create a sense of belonging

Zara, educator, notices that a group of four-year-old children has begun to build a fort in the sandpit. Watching the group are:

- Emmanuel, a child sitting in a wheelchair
- Scarlet, a two-year-old
- Garnet, a child who speaks little English.

Zara approaches the group and asks them about the project. She suggests that Emmanuel, Scarlet and Garnet may want to join in. The children in the group say they could join in, but then describe reasons why the other children would not be able to participate.

Zara suggests they problem-solve to work out ways they could include everyone.

The children ask Emmanuel if he would help get some more buckets and spades, then if he could move some blocks from one side of the yard to the other. They also ask if he could come out of the wheelchair and sit in the sand to help.

The children ask Scarlet to come into the sandpit. She says 'No'. The children tell her she can still watch.

Garnet is invited into the sandpit. One child approaches her and holds her hand, then points to the sand fort. Garnet smiles and comes into the sandpit. The children give her a bucket and point to where they want the next sand castle.





Practice Task 2

1. Four children have chosen not to participate in play using clay. Draw a line to match each reason for not participating to its example.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| * A momentary decision | * Lloyd has trouble holding the clay tools and feels uncomfortable using them. |
| * Result of an event | * Meridith has experienced clay before and doesn't like the slimy feeling. |
| * An ongoing difficulty | * Last time Rohas made something from clay it broke. The other children laughed. |
| * An ongoing decision | * Preety sees lots of children at the clay table. She watches for a while and moves away. She thinks she might return later when it is quiet. |

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

- | | | |
|---|-------|------|
| a. Play areas should promote a sense of belonging. | * Yes | * No |
| b. Play environments should be enticing and reflect the diversity of society. | * Yes | * No |
| c. Play is a child's way of learning and understanding the world around them. | * Yes | * No |
| d. If a child does not want to participate in an activity, you should keep trying to get them to join in. | * Yes | * No |

Summary

- Children learn through play.
- Cultural influences alter the value and expectations of play.
- Theorists contribute to your understanding of play and this supports your pedagogy.
- Play can support children to accept others.
- Educators must make sure all children have the opportunity to play.
- Each child should be represented in the environment and be participants in play.
- Educators must respect a child's choice not to participate in play.

Learning Checkpoint 1

Creating an environment through play

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

Case study

Serika notices Logan's play this week. She observes the following things:

- Observation 1: Logan has enjoyed playing in the home area and has taken an interest in role-playing as a mum or dad with other children.
- Observation 2: When Serika asked Logan to set the table, he asked her to show him how.
- Observation 3: Logan wanted to paint, but had difficulty holding the small paintbrush. Serika gave him a chunky brush.
- Observation 4: Logan played outdoors this week and has been practising climbing over the A-frame. He can climb to the top, but he is still having difficulty getting over to the other side.

1. Draw a line to match Serika's observation of Logan with the skills Logan is using to learn.

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| * Observation 1 | * Physical skills |
| * Observation 2 | * Creative skills |
| * Observation 3 | * Cognitive and communication skills |
| * Observation 4 | * Social, emotional and moral skills |

2. Which of the following statements about play-based learning are correct? Select all that apply.

- When Logan enjoys doing what he wants, this is play-based learning.
- Play-based learning allows Logan to explore and take his play in the direction he wants; however, Serika will support this play and provide information, support and materials as needed.
- When Serika uses teamwork and collaboration to reflect on her pedagogy, she will enhance Logan's play. This will help her implement play-based learning.
- No matter Logan's culture, his family will understand and value play-based learning.
- Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that Serika should provide structured play for Logan.

3. Select true or false for the following statement.

Serika has followed the NQS Quality area 1 by ensuring that it covers Standards 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. She has done this by providing experiences that are child-centred, responsive and based around Logan's interests and abilities.

* True * False

4. Draw a line to match each theory with its application.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| * Froebel | * Play has stages. |
| * Malaguzzi / Reggio Emilia | * Play stimulates thinking.
Through play, children develop language and reasoning. |
| * Parten | * Play is important to learning.
Children learn, observe, reason, express and create during play. |
| * Vygotsky | * Children need to use their imagination and natural materials.
Children learn moral and ethical abilities in early childhood. |
| * Steiner | * Play is the child's work.
Children learn constantly every day. |
| * Piaget | * Play is essential to a child's wellbeing.
Play is a method that allows adults and children to learn.
Both children and adults should work together to create a learning process. |
| * Montessori | * Children are active learners.
Learning should be built around children's interests. |



Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

- 2A** Choosing activities and equipment
- 2B** Providing environments for play

Providing for play

Children need an adequate range of experiences so that they are all occupied and have a choice of activities.

They need experiences that consider their individual and group needs, and allow them to take risks that encourage their development. To achieve this, educators must understand each child's needs, understand theories of play and development, and provide an environment that is focused on setting up for learning and enjoyment.

2A Choosing activities and equipment

View the environment from the child's perspective when choosing play activities and setting up.

Children participate in activities both indoors and outdoors, so both of these areas should be considered when creating a stimulating, positive and developmentally appropriate environment. Use materials and equipment from a variety of sources, and supply these according to children's individual interests, needs, ages and stages of development.



Provide a range of natural and safe materials for children to play with and enjoy.

Observing children

Educators observe children and record this information in various ways.

You could use recording methods such as the following:

- Learning stories: a story about learning noticed that explains what you observed, what you noticed and how you acted to provide for the child or children
- Anecdotal records: a brief description of what you observed after you see it
- Digital images: photos of what you observed
- Jottings: brief notes that include information about things that you noticed that are important

When you observe children and identify meaningful information, this helps you to:

- plan appropriate play and learning experiences that extend children's interests and skills
- support children's development at their level of skill, knowledge and understanding
- develop a sound knowledge of children's needs and cultures
- support, encourage and assist children
- record changes to children's strengths, interests and levels of development
- support discussion regarding children's skills, needs, interests and cultural practices.

Think about the learning and development that you noticed, what was important when you noticed it, or what was important from the view of educators, the child or their family.

The following are things you might notice as you reflect:

- learning
- strengths, interests, knowledge, abilities and ideas
- social interactions
- aspects of development
- reactions to the play environment
- improvements that could be made to extend or increase learning
- how the information links with EYLF outcomes, principles and practices.

Learning outcomes

Your reflection on observation will support you to understand learning and development outcomes, how these have been achieved and how they might be extended or adapted to meet needs.

Other educators will support you to do this, which helps your own reflection.

To link an outcome with your observation, follow these steps:

1. Access the approved learning framework suited to your service (EYLF)
2. Document your observation.
3. Choose one of the five learning outcomes that most closely relates to your observation.
4. Within the learning outcome you have chosen, select the sub-outcome that best represents the learning that has taken place.

By linking the learning against the outcomes, you are showing an understanding of what you have documented. This makes it meaningful and purposeful.

The following are the learning outcomes and sub-outcomes you will use.

Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity

- Children feel safe, secure, and supported
- Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency
- Children develop knowledgeable and confident self-identities
- Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect

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

- Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities, and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation
- Children respond to diversity with respect
- Children become aware of fairness
- Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment

Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing

- Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing
- Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners

- Children develop dispositions for learning such as curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity
- Children develop a range of skills and processes, such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating
- Children transfer and adapt what they have learned from one context to another
- Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies, and natural and processed materials

Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators

- Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
- Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts
- Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media
- Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work
- Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking

Further learning

Reflection can help you plan follow-up experiences that engage children.

Once educators analyse an experience, they can link it to a learning outcome, then the overall reflection on the experience, setting and environment can take place.

Further learning might involve:

- extending a current play experience
- adapting a current play experience
- increasing an interest
- challenging the child
- encouraging success
- reducing frustration
- stimulating the child
- engaging the child
- supporting an emerging skill
- enabling inclusion or participation where an additional support need is identified.

Example

Reflecting on observations

Here are three examples of how an educator reflects on their observations of learning and development that occur during play, then links each of these to an EYLF learning outcome. The educator has used jotting to explain what they have observed.

Example 1

'Katie played with Haran, pretending to be educators caring for the dolls. Katie said her doll was crying and wanted her mum. She asked Haran to give the doll a hug. Haran snuggled the doll for a few moments, then asked the doll if he would like to play in the sandpit.'

The educator links this to the EYLF learning outcome:

- Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity
- Sub-outcome: Children feel safe, secure and supported

To further learning and development, the educator plans to talk to the children about their feelings and what they do when they feel sad or afraid.

Example 2

'Honey talked to some other children about her birthday party and asked others what they will do for their birthday.'

The educator links this to the EYLF learning outcome:

- Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators
- Sub-outcome: Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes

To further learning and development, the educator plans to talk about how different people like to celebrate Australia Day.

Example 3

'Olaf built a car. He used scissors to cut string. This was the first time Olaf used scissors independently.'

This links to the EYLF learning outcome:

- Outcome 3: Children are confident and involved learners
- Sub-outcome: Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies, and natural and processed materials
- Sub-outcome: Children develop a range of skills and processes, such as problem-solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating

To further learning and development, the educator plans to introduce sticky tape and a dispenser, and show Olaf how to use this.

Appropriate resources

There are a range of suitable play and leisure resources that can be used to address children's interests and abilities, create stimulating environments and promote agency for those aged from birth to five years.

The following are some examples of resources you can provide to children of various ages for different areas of learning.

Area of learning	Birth to 12 months	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 5 years
Stimulate sight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mobiles that can be seen while lying down ➤ Pram and cot dangling toys ➤ Pictures and posters with human faces ➤ Books ➤ Hand puppets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Books with card or cloth covers ➤ Photographs of familiar people ➤ Objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greater variety of books ➤ Kaleidoscopes ➤ Bubbles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greater variety of books gradually increasing the complexity of storylines
Promote hearing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bells on elastic (firmly attached to wrist or ankle) ➤ Rattles ➤ Squeaky toys ➤ Soft foam blocks or balls with bells inside ➤ Music boxes ➤ Wind chimes ➤ Saucepans with wooden spoons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Simple musical instruments such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – maracas – drums – rhythm sticks – bells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greater variety of musical instruments, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – guitars – recorders – trumpets ➤ Classical, folk and children's music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greater variety of musical instruments, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – xylophones – keyboards – clackers – castanets ➤ Greater variety of music
Promote feeling and touching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teething rings ➤ Washable soft toys ➤ Various types of balls ➤ Texture rugs or mats ➤ Texture cloth books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Feely boxes or bags ➤ Sand trays ➤ Water troughs ➤ Finger paint ➤ Play dough ➤ Textured fabrics ➤ Safe natural materials (such as pine cones, smooth beach stones, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clay ➤ Mud ➤ Texture cards ➤ Greater variety of safe natural materials ➤ Sand and water equipment ➤ Simple garden tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Greater variety of natural materials – more complex sand and water play equipment

Area of learning	Birth to 12 months	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 5 years
Small muscle development and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Blocks ➤ Buckets ➤ Baskets ➤ Bath toys ➤ Sponges ➤ Pegs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interlocking blocks ➤ Hammer and peg boards ➤ Stacking pegs ➤ Interlocking train sets ➤ Spoons and cups for sand play ➤ Large bead frames ➤ Simple puzzles with knobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Variety of threading materials ➤ More complex puzzles ➤ Shape and colour sorting activities ➤ Construction sets ➤ Activity boards ➤ Dolls with zips, buttons, velcro, buckles, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Accessories for unit blocks ➤ Simple board games ➤ Felt boards with figures ➤ Variety of blocks ➤ More complex puzzles of 20+ pieces
Large muscle development and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Large plastic-covered foam mats or cylinders for rolling on ➤ Suitable swings ➤ Large cushions ➤ Boxes and tunnels for crawling through ➤ Large blocks for climbing over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ride-on toys ➤ Climbing equipment (steps, crates, outdoor or homemade blocks, etc.) ➤ Stable wooden trolleys ➤ Doll prams ➤ Low balance beams ➤ Tyres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Wheelbarrows ➤ Small wooden ladders ➤ Mini trampolines ➤ Swings ➤ Slides ➤ Barrels ➤ Large inflated tyres for bouncing ➤ Tricycles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unit blocks ➤ Woodworking bench with real tools ➤ Ring toss games ➤ Bean bags and targets ➤ Simple bat and ball games ➤ Obstacle courses
Encourage imaginative and pretend play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hats ➤ Dolls ➤ Toy cars ➤ Wheeled toys ➤ Soft toys ➤ Mirrors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Baskets for carrying ➤ Small school cases ➤ Telephones ➤ Washable dolls ➤ Tea sets ➤ Simple kitchen utensils ➤ Toy cars ➤ Train sets ➤ Small brooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stove ➤ Sink ➤ Iron and board ➤ Sturdy wooden dolls house with a range of people ➤ Zoo and farm animals ➤ Cameras ➤ Vehicles ➤ Boats ➤ Planes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pretend-play prop boxes (fire fighter, ambulance, hospital, hairdresser, dentist, shop, post office, bakery, etc.)

Area of learning	Birth to 12 months	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 to 5 years
Encourage art and creative expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Chunky black crayons ➤ Repeated actions and games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Large thick black crayons or pencils ➤ Large sheets of white paper ➤ Thick paint brushes and paint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Coloured torn paper for pasting ➤ Easels and brushes ➤ Play dough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Blunt scissors ➤ Staplers ➤ Hole punchers ➤ Tape ➤ Blunt darning needles and wool ➤ Felt-tip pens ➤ Crayons

Indoor experiences

Indoor play spaces provide areas for all types of play, including quiet play, active play, play in groups and areas for personal space.

The way children are grouped can affect how you set up these areas. For example, your service may group children by age range, such as infants, toddlers and preschoolers, or you may have family groupings where the ages are mixed.

To identify appropriate and stimulating experiences and equipment for the indoor play area, you need to know about the children's development.

When you arrange your indoor space carefully, infants and toddlers are offered opportunities to practise their skills. Most activity areas for infants will be arranged on the floor for easy access, rather than on tables.

Infants and toddlers usually use indoor areas for:

- discovery – exploring interesting items with their senses in a safe way
- crawling and climbing
- playing with wheeled toys
- looking in mirrors, where they can see their reflection
- manipulative play
- pretend play
- block play
- messy play
- creative activity
- quiet time.

Preschoolers usually use indoor areas for:

- individual play, group play or the completion of projects
- dramatic play
- block play
- reading or listening to books (quiet area)
- manipulative play with puzzles, threading and construction sets
- maths games for sorting, classifying, matching and ordering
- science and nature activities
- creative arts, such as clay, painting, drawing and collage
- sand and water play
- woodwork
- cooking.

Offer a balance of resources so children can choose from various options, yet not be overwhelmed or crowded.

Outdoor experiences

The outdoor areas need to have the same level of consideration as indoor play areas; almost all experiences planned indoors can be offered in an outdoor space.

There should be opportunities for physically active play and gross motor activities. All age groups need to be given opportunities for physically active play. Children need to be able to involve themselves in stimulating physical activities such as running, jumping, digging, pushing, skipping and climbing.

Outdoor play spaces need to be clearly defined so children can immediately see how the space can be used and so they can move easily between spaces without interfering with others at play. Stepping stones and the use of other natural features can provide children with creative options for dividing the area and providing further play options.

Provide opportunities to rearrange equipment, change location, add or remove pieces and engage in simple or complex play.

The following items and equipment may be offered in an outdoor play space:

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

For active, hands-on play, children need areas where they can experiment and explore. They need to be challenged and they need to be able to actively manipulate their play space by redesigning and reinventing with movable equipment and props. If you provide appropriate materials and equipment for children, they can create the type of play experience they want to participate in.

When you provide children with the opportunity to move indoors and outdoors as they please, this is called an indoor–outdoor program. Your staff ratios and service design will determine whether this is an option for you.

The following table describes various outdoor areas and how they promote children’s learning, experimentation and exploration. These might be used for individual, group or project experiences.

Type of play	Action	Learning concepts
Water play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Manipulating water ➤ Controlling water ➤ Pouring ➤ Tipping ➤ Pumping ➤ Siphoning ➤ Spraying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Capacity ➤ Volume ➤ Floating and sinking ➤ Wet and dry ➤ Force and pressure ➤ Evaporation and condensation
Sand play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Digging ➤ Pouring ➤ Moulding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Using imagination: pretend play learning ➤ Wet and dry ➤ Weight ➤ Texture ➤ Volume ➤ Large and small muscle development
Wood – blocks and woodwork play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hammering ➤ Sawing ➤ Stacking ➤ Fitting together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pretend play ➤ Maths learning ➤ Working together ➤ Working alone ➤ Problem-solving ➤ Comparing ➤ Classifying ➤ Measurement ➤ Parts and whole
Earth play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Digging ➤ Moulding ➤ Cutting ➤ Planting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Texture ➤ Form ➤ Weight ➤ Wet and dry

Outdoors and belonging

The outdoor environment is very important to children. Some have little access to outdoor spaces and welcome the opportunities it provides.

Respect for the land and maintaining the environment are also central to many cultures.

Nurturing children's relationship to the land helps them develop a strong sense of identity and belonging. It is helpful to acknowledge this by allowing children to:

- work and play outside as much as possible
- use the immediate environment as a source of learning
- allow children to play in family groupings.

Some children may find relief in the outdoor environment away from the close proximity of large groups of children, and the noise and sensory stimulation that can be experienced in the indoor environment. By offering children the opportunity to choose indoor or outdoor experiences, you can allow them to freely play and express themselves in their own individual way.

Outdoor spaces can also be used for family gatherings or informal meetings.

Natural and real materials

Natural and real materials help children to experience colour, texture, size and shape.

There is also a warmth and lifeforce to such materials that children can often connect with more than with plastic or artificial toys and materials.

Natural and real materials allow children to feel a sense of connectedness and responsibility to the world of living things as they become more aware of life around them. When you show wonder and care for all life, children will imitate this behaviour. Natural and real materials show children that they are capable and respected.

Natural and real materials that children may enjoy:

- Cloth and fabric: Many fabrics are made from plant or animal fibres such as cotton, linen, silk or wool.
- Natural materials: Shells, pebbles, rocks, twigs, leaves, feathers, tree bark, gumnuts, seed pods and log sections can be used in play and in many craft activities (be sure to check if these are poisonous or pose a choking hazard).
- Real materials: Child-sized hammers, safety knives, vases, telephones, and pots and pans give children a more engaging play experience.
- Dolls: Small knitted dolls, wooden carved dolls, peg dolls, cloth dolls, corn husk dolls and rope dolls make interesting changes from commercially produced dolls.
- Blocks: Wooden off-cuts make a change from commercially produced blocks; carpentry and joinery businesses may be happy to supply these (ensure these have smooth edges and are free from splinters)
- Animals: You may provide small wooden animals from different countries that children can play with while learning about each animal. You may even decide to have live animals such as chickens, lizards or rabbits in the outside yard (check local council requirements).
- Cane baskets: These come in a great variety of shapes and sizes and can be collected at Easter or purchased cheaply from op shops.

Recycled materials

It's a good idea to incorporate recycled materials into your daily plans of experiences.

Recycled materials can be sourced from:

- parents
- the service office
- a nearby factory or office
- second-hand stores.

The following table includes some examples.

Materials for indoors and outdoors	Possible uses
Old pots and pans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Home play ➤ Sand play ➤ Growing plants ➤ Watering plants ➤ Storing or displaying materials
Wooden trays, bowls, dishes and cutting boards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Home play ➤ Storing or displaying materials ➤ Sorting games
Glass jars and bottles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storage ➤ Paint, glue or water jars ➤ Growing plants ➤ Watering plants ➤ Decorating
Nuts, bolts, nails and screws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sorting ➤ Matching ➤ Sequencing (from large to small) ➤ Woodwork
Tyres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stepping stones ➤ Edging ➤ Planters ➤ Borders ➤ Sand trays
Miscellaneous items, such as bottle tops, paper towel rolls, egg cartons, used or shredded paper, wood scraps, food packaging, corks, buttons, fabric, wool, old cards, yoghurt containers or pipes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Collage ➤ Dramatic play ➤ Construction ➤ Floating/sinking ➤ Counting ➤ Matching ➤ Sorting ➤ Sewing ➤ Weaving ➤ Home-made musical instruments ➤ Sand play ➤ An 'invention centre' or 'creation station'

Example

Observing and making changes

Janson has noticed that the children are running around outside with little direction. Resources and the environment are getting damaged. Janson asks the children what they would like to do outdoors. The children want more time and activities.

Janson moves the existing equipment around to create a new challenging obstacle course and adds a variety of loose parts for the children to add to and adjust the activity. To create more challenge in the sandpit, Janson has added a number of wooden cars, trucks and loose tree rounds. Janson also brings out a painting table and attaches a large roll of paper to the fence so the children can create a mural. As a result, Janson finds that the children are more engaged and challenged, and that the equipment and environment are being respected and cared for.



Practice Task 3

1. Which of the following statements are true about planning for play? Select all that apply.

- Educators need to place more emphasis on the indoor environment as it is more suited to learning.
- Real, natural and recycled materials are best used outdoors.
- You can use observations to gather information about children's abilities and interests. When you link these to learning outcomes, they will help you to plan and set up for further learning and development experiences.
- Indoor and outdoor spaces should be balanced. Many indoor experiences can be taken outdoors. This creates a stimulating environment.
- Educators need to be aware of the creative play and learning needs of children of various ages and set up areas that encourage this.
- You should always plan experiences where two or more children are playing to help them develop social skills.

2B Providing environments for play

Providing a stimulating, challenging and safe environment allows children to explore, discover and improve their abilities.

An environment that allows children to make choices, and reflects their diversity, interests and abilities will enhance their play and leisure time.

Both group (collaborative) and individual play activities and experiences can be made appropriate and inviting through your actions. These actions are decided according to your service curriculum, safety procedures, and your knowledge of each child and group.

You should consider the following things in relation to play:

- stages of play
- materials and equipment
- time
- people
- space
- safety.

Stages of play

People who have studied children's play have noted differences in stages of play based on how children of different ages and stages interact, and have classified these into different play types.

Social play refers to the way children play with others. Very young children have not gained the social skills to play with others, so they are in a different stage of social play than children aged four years and over, who play happily in groups.

Theorist Mildred Parten defined the following types of play, which reflect the social dimensions of play.



Solitary play

Solitary play is where children are playing individually and do not have any social contact with others. Solitary play is mostly seen in children under two years, but older children may also engage in solitary play, as they enjoy time alone to follow their individual interests, or to relax and recharge.

An environment set up for solitary play should have:

- experiences that are for one child only, such as a pop-up toy, a sensory mat or a puzzle
- space suitable for one child to work at, such as a small table with one chair, a cushion with an individual activity or an easel.



Parallel play

Children between two and three years old begin to enjoy being near others and participating in the same activities. Although they are still very self-centred and are usually unable to share or talk together effectively, they may copy and play in the same way as a child nearby. An example of parallel play is when two children are side by side both squeezing and poking play dough, but not interacting together.

Older children may choose to play side-by-side in parallel play, even though they have the skills to play together.

To set up for parallel play, provide experiences:

- where small groups of children can participate in the same or similar play activities independently
- similar to those for solitary play, such as puzzles, car mats, painting, play dough or a book corner.



Associative play

Associative play usually begins in children at early preschool age. It is called associative play because children are associating with each other. As a child's language skills increase and improve, they become more aware of other children and better able to communicate.

During associative play a child may play with others, speak to them, laugh together, and react to experiences and other children. Although these children are playing together, their interactions will be brief and the play may not last very long. For example, children may borrow and lend toys, and laugh together without actually cooperating or playing with common ideas in mind.

Early superhero play is often seen at an associative play level, as groups of children 'fly' around and deal with emergencies. However, the play is not organised and the children do not talk together about plots or particular characters.

To encourage associative play, you may provide:

- props for imaginative play
- experiences that require children to share materials with others; for example, car mats, block corners and dress-up areas.



Cooperative play

At late preschool age, children become less focused on themselves and more interested in others. Because their language is becoming more complex, their interactions with other children usually last longer, as they begin to collaborate by sharing ideas and solving problems together.

They enjoy taking the roles of leader or follower, and they give roles to each other in their play; for example, 'You be the dad, I'll be the mum. Joey can be the baby!' Plots will be discussed and played out; for example, 'Now you go to the table and I will come in and serve dinner.' Because children are working together and the play is lasting longer, this is called cooperative play.

You can encourage cooperative play by:

- providing for role-play, imaginative or dramatic play
- including dress-ups, cubbies, home furniture, car mats or block areas
- providing opportunities to collaborate and develop ideas.



Play with rules

Older preschool and early primary school age children become interested in more structured games; that is, those with clear rules.

Games with rules include:

- tabletop games, such as board games and card games
- games played in lines or circles
- games with balls, bats or marbles
- skipping rope games
- hopscotch
- cricket
- football.

You can support play with rules by ensuring materials and equipment are in good order and are readily available to children. Most play with rules requires space and an understanding of the rules of play. Children also need to collaborate with each other as they share what they know and agree on how the game will operate.

Avoid competitive games where possible, as they reduce children's opportunities to practise skills. In competitive games, the children with the greatest skills get lots of practice, while the children with poor or less-developed skills are left out or are eliminated early. This reduces practice time, provides little chance for developing skills, and can also be damaging to self-esteem. In this situation children might become bored, upset or angry. By ensuring games are non-competitive, you ensure all children participate in some activity most of the time, and that there is not a winning team or child, but a group of children with equal opportunity to develop their skills.



Unoccupied play

Children of all ages can become involved in unoccupied play, where a child is being occupied watching anything that happens to be of momentary interest, rather than actively playing. When there is nothing exciting taking place, the child may play with their own body, get on and off chairs, stand around, follow an educator or sit in one spot glancing around the room. Unoccupied play may not seem important, but you must respect a child's decision not to participate, and see the value in a child's observation of an environment and the people in it.



Onlooker play

Children of all ages can become involved in onlooker play. A child who spends time watching other children at play is participating in onlooker play. The child may talk to the children they are observing by asking questions or giving suggestions, but will not enter into the play.

This type of play differs from unoccupied play in that the onlooker is observing a particular group of children rather than anything that happens to be of interest at the time. The child stands or sits within speaking distance of the group so they can see and hear everything that takes place. As with unoccupied play, onlooker play may not seem important, but you must respect a child's decision not to participate, and see the value in a child's observation of an environment and the people in it.

Familiarise yourself with these stages of play and how play influences development so you can:

- develop expectations for children that are realistic; for example, not expecting infants to play in groups
- offer children suitable play experiences, materials, activities and resources; for example, making sure that children who can play in groups have plenty of opportunities to do so
- interact with children in ways that foster self-esteem and promote learning to help children achieve their full potential.

Example Stages of play

Charlotte has been approached by a parent who is concerned that her toddler is not playing with others. Charlotte explains that generally children under two will play by themselves without any contact with others and that this is very normal. She adds that children at this age begin to play alongside others and participate in activities with others, but do not necessarily interact with them. Charlotte reassures the mother that it isn't usually until early preschool that children begin to associate with each other and briefly play together, and that longer periods of playing with friends and working together does not start until late preschool age.



Ensuring sufficient time for play

Agency occurs when children are being fully involved and enthusiastic about what they are doing.

When children are rushed through play, they miss opportunities to fully participate in the activity and to develop a sense of agency. This may cause frustration and reduce learning. Play for children must be unhurried and uninterrupted.

Children need time to:

- make choices and decisions
- become involved
- change direction
- practise and master skills
- form relationships
- express themselves.

When you allow children enough time for their play to develop, this gives them the opportunity to become involved and engaged, and to feel challenged and stimulated. Children may become frustrated or disruptive if they are not allowed to see their play through to a logical conclusion.

Your timetable can influence when you set up an experience. This might alter based on:

- the length of time needed to complete the experience
- the amount of time available
- other experiences or routines being completed
- the amount of space available
- safety requirements
- the number of educators available
- materials and equipment required.

Each experience engages children in different ways, and each child will show interest in their own time. The period of time you provide activities for should be dictated by the children's participation rather than being a set number of days or weeks, or part a planning cycle. In any one play space, experiences should be offered over varying times.

When possible, allow play to be completed before changing activities or moving on. If this is not possible, explain to the child why their play needs to be interrupted, and organise a time when they can continue to play.

Example

Discussing time for play with a child

An educator is aware that a child, Jackie, has worked for a long time on a building project. She also knows that lunch is ready and the building activity needs to be interrupted. The educator speaks to Jackie and they agree on a plan.

'Jackie, you've done such a good job building that tower, but it's lunchtime now. Can you please go and wash your hands for lunch? What if we put a couple of blocks around it to keep it safe until you can get back to it? That way your tower is safe and you can finish it after lunch.'



Activities lasting multiple days

Many experiences could run for a number of days or even weeks.

You might choose to continue providing an experience if:

- children are still engaged in play and interested in the activity
- children are challenged by the experience and are learning or practising skills
- it can be extended to add interest, challenge or build on learning
- it takes more than one session or day to complete.

Seek out opportunities to plan or create experiences that run over multiple days. There may be a project that all children might want to participate in, or there may be two or more children with similar ideas working individually or collectively on a project. Sometimes a project can be completed at any time available, other projects might need to be organised over a period of time. You may also need space to store a project or materials and equipment.

Examples of experiences or projects that may run over multiple days include:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| ➤ murals | ➤ puppets and/or puppet shows |
| ➤ paintings | ➤ vegetable gardens |
| ➤ drawings | ➤ recycling stations |
| ➤ books or stories | ➤ charity collection projects. |

Any experience may extend over time if children maintain interest and educators provide for the children's needs.

Providing sufficient space

You often have limited control over the amount of space available for play.

Regulations set minimum standards for the amount of space that must be provided; however, how you arrange the available space is up to you. You may occupy play space that is solely for your use, or you may share a space with other groups and need to set up each morning and pack up each afternoon.

Children need enough space to complete the actions that are expected during the experience. For example, if a child is pasting, they need space for their equipment and for them to move easily as they paste and design. You may also need to consider spaces for storing incomplete work or work that will extend over multiple days.

Try to work with children to decide how available space should be used, and remember the points listed in the following table.

Hands-on experiences	Children need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ space to explore, touch, smell, move, create and build ➤ environments set out in an interesting way.
Opportunities to be alone	Children need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ quiet times if they become tired or overstimulated ➤ time away from groups ➤ space away from others to spend time in quiet, individual activities.
Choices	Children need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ space that prompts them to choose to do something that interests them and promotes their competency and confidence ➤ sufficient play spaces or experiences to have a choice of two or three activities ➤ indoor and outdoor choices.
Challenges	Children need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ a variety of possibilities to challenge their creativity ➤ encouragement and support to think creatively, solve problems and make decisions ➤ flexible space that allows them to play in self-created play or to mix two or more play experiences ➤ projects that run over multiple days.
Safety and security	Children need: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ to feel safe without feeling overprotected ➤ to have a balance between safety and appropriate risk-taking.

Materials and equipment

The materials and equipment made available to children has a huge influence on the quality and types of play children can engage in.

You should ensure that:

- materials match individual children's interests, needs, abilities, competency levels and confidence
- there are enough resources for the number of children in the group to make choices
- good-quality resources are provided
- materials and equipment are regularly rotated to ensure children are constantly provided with a variety of activities.

The way the environment is set up tells children what they can and can't do, how and where they can do it, and how they can work together.

The following table assists you to provide for children's play through the use of materials and equipment.

Method	Why this works
<p>Arrange the environment, materials and equipment in a well-organised, attractive and interesting way to gain children’s attention and invite participation.</p> <p>(NQS Quality Area 3 Physical environment - Standard 3.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This works best when it matches the needs and interests of the children. ➤ It allows the children to see the options and make choices and decisions. ➤ It helps children see where they can play and how they can play.
<p>Be alert to children’s indications that play experiences need to change or be reset.</p> <p>(NQS Quality Area 1 Educational program and practice - Standard 1.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Changing experiences encourages new use of ideas and materials. It supports children to remain interested in and challenged by an activity. ➤ Resetting demonstrates that you respect the materials and helps children become involved again.
<p>Ensure that every child has several play experiences to choose from.</p> <p>(NQS Quality Area 3 Physical environment - Standard 3.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Think about the different interests and skills, and build enough options for children to feel you have considered them individually. This keeps children involved and interested.
<p>Clearly label shelves and storage.</p> <p>(NQS Quality Area 3 Physical environment - Standard 3.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This shows children where materials are and what equipment is available.
<p>Make sure there is enough interesting equipment and a variety of materials.</p> <p>(NQS Quality Area 3 Physical environment - Standard 3.2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ This is particularly relevant to younger children who may have difficulty waiting their turn.
<p>Use safe, age-appropriate materials and equipment that is in good condition.</p> <p>(NQS Quality Area 3 Physical environment - Standard 3.1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Unsafe or damaged materials and equipment are a risk. ➤ If children are unable to use materials and equipment because they are not suited to their abilities, they will become discouraged.

Look at the play setting from the child’s point of view, checking that everything is a potential stimulus for the children and sends positive messages about how they should behave and feel.

People

The range of experiences presented to children is influenced by the number of staff, the number of children, the ratio of children to educators, and the qualifications and experience of educators.

Think about the time people need to be able to interact with children, enhance social play, model appropriate behaviour and extend the play where possible. Consider how educators are positioned to ensure children’s safety and wellbeing.

Play is enhanced by the teamwork and collaboration of educators as they all contribute to the effectiveness of the play environment. As an educator, you have influence over:

- how the area is set up
- what resources and materials are used
- how safe and well supervised the areas are
- whether children are encouraged to take on challenges and use risk-taking skills
- the level of belonging each child feels
- how time and learning are prioritised
- how much time is spent indoors and outdoors
- each child's sense of agency.

The following table provides ways that you as an educator can help to provide an inviting play environment. These are referred to in Quality Area 5 Relationships with children, Standard 5.1 of the NQS: Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.

Method	Why this works
Get to know children and form positive relationships with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children are more likely to be interested if they feel you are a caring, interested person who displays enthusiasm, playfulness and enjoyment in your interactions. ➤ Your knowledge of the children's abilities will allow you to support them to decide on experiences that match their competence. This assists in building their confidence.
Model what you encourage in children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Be enthusiastic, listen to the children and participate fully.
Listen to children and accept their feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Some children will not want to participate. This decision must be respected.

Safety

Look at the basic environment and identify how it needs to operate and be presented to ensure safety.

A safe environment is non-threatening. It allows the child to be comfortable, to share thoughts and ideas, ask questions, make mistakes and take developmentally appropriate risks as part of learning. A non-threatening environment suits the developmental abilities of children, where children and educators are encouraged to interact without put-downs, punishments or ridicule.

Consider the children’s levels of:

- understanding of safety and danger
- spontaneous behaviour
- ability to follow limits and guidelines
- curiosity
- interest in adult-modelled behaviour
- independence and attempts at greater independence
- understanding of consequences
- mobility and stability.

Service policies and procedures, regulations, standards, and health and safety legislation are all in place to reduce the incidence of injury and the legal implications that staff may face. Some specific components include the following.

Requirement	Component	Expectation
Education and Care Services National Law	Section 165 – Offence to inadequately supervise children	Children must be supervised.
	Section 167 – Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards	Safety includes identifying and removing hazards.
Education and Care Services National Regulations	Regulation 103 – Premises, furniture and equipment to be safe, clean and in good repair	Services must provide sufficient appropriately sized furniture, materials and equipment that is well maintained.
	Regulation 105 – Furniture, materials and equipment	
	Regulation 107 – Space requirements—indoor	Indoor and outdoor spaces must meet minimum size requirements per child.
	Regulation 108 – Space requirements—outdoor	An element of nature must be included in the environment and shade should be considered in design.
	Regulation 113 – Outdoor space—natural environment	
	Regulation 114 – Outdoor space—shade	
	Regulation 115 – Premises designed to facilitate supervision	

Requirement	Component	Expectation
National Quality Standard (NQS)	Quality Area 2 Children's health and safety Standard 2.1 – Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted	Children need opportunities for safe physical activity
	Quality Area 2 Children's health and safety Standard 2.2 – Each child is protected	Educators must supervise children at all times and protect them from harm and hazards.
	Quality Area 3 Physical environment Standard 3.1 – The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of the service	Indoor and outdoor spaces must be suitable for every child to access, and must be safe, clean and well maintained.
	Quality Area 3 Physical environment Standard 3.2 – The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning	Children are engaged in quality play-based experiences. Resources, materials and equipment can be used in a number of ways and are sufficient.

There are day-to-day risk minimisation routines that are affected by these guidelines, such as:

- sun safety
- equipment maintenance
- providing soft fall areas.

When considering the design of equipment, minimise risks by looking for:

- conformity to the Australian Standards, which shows the design has been considered for safety
- recommendations in relation to the age and developmental stage of the children using the equipment
- clear assembly instructions to avoid breakage or disassembly
- instructions for use and supervision.

The older the children are, the more likely it is that they will be able to manage equipment safely. Despite your observations of what may be suitable for a particular child or group of children, you must always present equipment that is in good order and provide adequate supervision.



Practice Task 4

1. Draw a line to match each stage of play to the type of experience.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| * Parallel play | * Individual experience |
| * Associative play | * Indoor experience |
| * Cooperative play | * Outdoor experience |
| * Solitary play | * Experience run over multiple days |
| * Play with rules | * Group experience |

2. Which of the following NQF components guide service curriculum and children's health and safety procedures to allow you to select and set up areas, resources and materials that suit different kinds of play? Select all that apply.

- Section 167 of the Education and Care Services National Law
- Regulation 103 of the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- Standard 3.2 of the NQS
- Quality Area 2 of the NQS
- Quality Area 5 of the NQS
- EYLF Principle: Health and safety

3. Draw a line to match each planning consideration to the way educators should provide environments for play.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| * Materials and equipment | * When educators rush experiences, children may become frustrated. |
| * Safety | * Educators must set up in ways that allow children choices. Their choice of experiences must support children's competency and confidence levels. |
| * People | * Children's interests and abilities should be reflected in the way educators set up. They should reflect each child's level of competency, help develop confidence and be stimulating and challenging. Educators may extend experiences as a response to children's reactions. |
| * Space | * The number and age of children and the activities available determine the number of educators needed. Educators must work as a team and collaborate to enhance play experiences. |
| * Time | * Educators must follow service policies, procedures and routines to reduce the incidence of injury. The environment needs to operate and be presented in a way that is non-threatening and comfortable. |

Summary

- When educators are aware of the stages of children's play, they can provide environments and play situations that suit the age and stage of the child.
- Educators observe children to identify their strengths and interests, and in this way provide play that is suited to them.
- To provide appropriate play environments, educators must consider time, space, materials and equipment, people and safety.
- Children learn from indoor and outdoor environments. These environments should be balanced to both be seen as important.
- Natural and recycled materials encourage exploration and an understanding of the world. They support children's curiosity and build on their imagination and creativity.

Learning Checkpoint 2

Providing for play

Use the following images to answer the questions.



1. Identify four images that show experiences that use real, natural or recycled materials.

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2. Identify four images that show indoor experiences.

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3. Identify two images that show outdoor experiences.

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4. Identify one image that shows a group experience.

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5. Identify three images that show experiences suited to children aged from birth to 23 months.

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6. Identify one image that shows an experience that would link with learning Outcome 5, Sub-outcome: Children engage with a range of texts and gain meaning from these texts.

.....

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

- | | | |
|--|-------|------|
| a. When setting up this experience you need to remove hazards that make the physical environment unsafe. This is in line with NQS Element 2.2.1. | * Yes | * No |
| b. This experience would not be challenging unless it is set up high above the ground. | * Yes | * No |
| c. If you observed that there were not enough materials and that children were falling from the equipment and getting hurt, you might alter how you set up and supervise the experience. This would be critical reflection on pedagogical practice and would meet NQS Element 3.2.2. | * Yes | * No |
| d. d. If you provided a sheet, it could encourage creative stimulation and provide an activity that might be run over multiple days. The sheet might be draped over the tree frame to make a tent. This may represent the culture of a family that camps often. | * Yes | * No |
| e. You could only supervise this experience alone. Collaboration would occur after the experience when you identify how you could improve your practices. This would meet NQS Standard 6.1. | * Yes | * No |
| f. Educators should interact with children during this experience. They can provide encouragement and this will help them develop strong relationships with children and make the activity non-threatening. This links with Quality area 5. | * Yes | * No |
| g. You must make sure that children move through the experience quickly so that everyone gets a turn. | * Yes | * No |



Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

- 3A Creating a sense of agency
- 3B Reflecting on play

Facilitating ongoing play and learning

Educators play a significant role in children's play, and should consider children's needs when initiating play and before entering play.

Educators should share children's enjoyment and enthusiasm, facilitate experiences, and provide a flexible and safe routine that allows children to have control and choice over their environment. When you provide for play, children remain interested and challenged for longer periods and can also find a broader range of options for their play.

3A Creating a sense of agency

Children's sense of agency, or influence over their environment, will increase if you show that you encourage and value their play, but still allow them to make their own decisions and choices.

This increases their competency and confidence as well as providing quality play opportunities.

You can develop agency, competency and confidence in children by:

- showing children that you value play
- spending time with children during play
- sharing children's interests and enjoyment.

Just like adults, children sometimes feel like being part of the group, collaborating or joining in with a conversation; at other times they feel like being alone or sitting back to watch the rest of the group.

The components of the National Quality Framework (NQF) reflect the importance of your relationships with children in the following ways.



Allow children to make their own choices about the direction they want to take their play in.

NQF component	Requirement	Expectation
Education and Care Services National Regulations	Regulation 152 – Interactions with children	Educators must encourage children to express themselves and their opinions, and participate in experiences that build their self-esteem.
	Regulation 156 – Relationships in groups	Services must take into regard the size and make up of groups of children to ensure they are able to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships.
National Quality Standard (NQS) Quality Area 5 Relationships with children	Standard 5.1 – Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child	Educators must build secure relationships with children through responsive and meaningful interactions.

NQF component	Requirement	Expectation
<i>Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (EYLF)</i>	Principle: Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships	Educators should interact positively with children to help them develop a sense of security that enables them to explore and learn.
	Principle: High expectations and equity	Educators should hold high expectations for achievement and support children to succeed in their challenges.
	Practice: Responsiveness to children	Educators who are responsive to children are able to extend them and engage them in learning through play.
	Practice: Holistic approaches	Children's minds, bodies and spirits are all connected. Educators need to take care of each child's needs. This can occur through relationships that are responsive and consistent.
	Practice: Learning through play	When educators create strong relationships with children it allows them to feel safe as they discover, create, improvise and imagine. These educators can become welcome participants in play.
	Practice: Intentional teaching	Learning occurs through discussion and conversation. Engaging intentional teaching encourages children's curiosity and their interest in the educator.
	Practice: Learning environments	Welcoming spaces enrich the lives of children and respond to their interests and needs.
	Practice: Assessment for learning	The process of gathering and reflecting on information about children helps educators to development relationships suited to each child.

Play invitations

When children invite you to play it is obvious you are welcome.

The children you are playing with are likely to already have in mind what they want you to do, and will ask you to join in as they feel you can contribute. With this in mind, you need to listen and watch closely, as the children continue to give you clues as to your role.

Children may invite you into play if they:

- want you to take a particular role in their dramatic play
- need extra materials or resources
- need help to negotiate, collaborate or resolve an issue
- enjoy your company.

The following table summarises the types of play invitations that may be encountered with different age groups.

Age grouping	Play invitations
Infant	<p>Your involvement may be required if the infant requires:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ access to materials for play ➤ play focus as the child enjoys rhymes, peek-a-boo or games that involve their bodies.
Toddler	<p>Toddlers will often be clear about what they want you to do.</p> <p>Your involvement may include simple dramatic play. For example, they will pour you cups of pretend coffee and hand them to you, or provide you with a telephone and say, 'Hello'.</p> <p>Toddlers will ask you to help them achieve their goals, such as accessing the materials.</p>
Preschooler	<p>Preschoolers will be clear about what they want you to do.</p> <p>They have developed skills in role-playing and can have complex ideas about their dramatic play stories.</p> <p>Their play will include explanations of what they want you to do next. You will notice these directions within the preschoolers' imaginative play, with or without adult involvement. For example, 'Yolanda, go to work.'; 'Sheldon, it's time to do the washing.'; 'You have to go to bed now.'</p> <p>Preschoolers may invite you to support their skills and provide them with materials and equipment.</p> <p>They will have lots of questions (what, why and how) that you may be able to solve for them.</p> <p>You may be needed to play board games or explain how something works.</p>

When invited into play situations, remember the role you are taking and try to participate in a manner that suits the experience. It is very easy to turn into the 'educator' and want to provide continual learning and extension.

Engaging children

It can be challenging to decide the best moment to introduce a change or transition to play.

An interruption to children’s play can lead to positive ongoing play, but can also result in closing the play down.

The following table provides some techniques you may attempt when initiating play.

How you can initiate play	Examples
Extending play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask some open-ended questions that may result in a deepening of the experience.
Talking about actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When children are playing with play dough or clay, ask them how it feels as they squeeze and pound it. ➤ Ask them if they can do some new things; for example, ‘Can you roll it and shape it?’
Showing children what to do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Show a toddler how to hit pegs with a mallet by doing it yourself. ➤ Demonstrate how to use the glue stick.

Watch children’s reactions. You might only need to start the children off with a new activity before stepping back, or the children may demonstrate they want your involvement to continue with questions and other interactions.

If your initiation of play occurs in response to a child finding it difficult to join in, you may:

- support them in asking to join in
- develop a new role for them in the existing play; for example, ‘I just met a nurse and she may be able to help with your sick baby.’

Your goal is to encourage competency and confidence. Consider:

- how the play will be affected
- how the additional child will fit into the play
- how the additional child may be introduced to the play.

Participating in play

You can engage with children during play in a number of ways.

The following table provides some ways you can participate, while still helping the play to develop and the children to learn and become competent and confident.

Method of indirect participation	Details	Example 1 Children are filling and emptying containers of water in a tub.	Example 2 Children are pretending to be crocodiles; they are slithering over the floor and using their arms as jaws.
Commenting	<p>Comments about a learning opportunity or an aspect of the play the children may be ignoring or not noticing.</p> <p>You are not involved in the play, but helping the children focus on what you think is important.</p>	You say, 'All of your containers are full now!'	You say, 'Your fingers are like big teeth, strong and long like a crocodile.'
Questioning	<p>Extends the play and learning, and encourages children to think more about what they are doing.</p> <p>You are not involved in the play, but helping the children think further about the play they are involved in.</p>	You ask, 'Which container holds the most water?'	You ask, 'What food have the crocodiles been eating today?'
Giving information	<p>Watch children playing and then later, when appropriate, gather the players together to look at a book, video, picture or other resource that gives them more information about the topic of their play.</p> <p>This new source of information may give children new ideas for their play.</p>	You introduce a storybook about the concepts of full and empty.	You show the children a factual book or DVD about crocodiles.
Retelling, replaying and storytelling	<p>Replay involves talking about or dramatising what you saw the children doing.</p> <p>This helps children reflect on and think about what they were doing.</p> <p>It is also a good way to show children how much you respect their play.</p>	You may retell their play at morning tea when they are pouring their drinks. You could say, 'I saw Ben and Tammy playing with the containers in the water this morning. They were filling up the containers until they were full. The water went to the very top. When the water got to the top it splashed right over the edge.'	You could retell their play in a story; for example, 'Once upon a time there were two small crocodiles who lived in our room. Their names were Sol and Java. They were friendly crocodiles, but they slithered all over the floor and we all had to be careful not to step on them. I wonder what they will be doing tomorrow.'

Simple discussion can be important for learning and demonstrating interest in children’s play. However, you need to know when to interact and when to allow the children to continue playing. Sometimes the children will learn more from having no interaction, as they continue the activity or work something out for themselves.

Extending play

As you watch children play and listen to their ideas, you will find that opportunities arise for you to provide support and extension to their play.

Extending play involves providing new ideas, objects or suggestions. When you provide extensions to play, children remain engaged for longer periods and can find a broader range of options for their play. This means that their sense of agency has been increased. The extensions could take the form of:

- adding new props to a play space, such as dress-ups, toys or equipment
- suggesting a larger or smaller space for play
- adding a new idea relevant to the topic.

Educator roles in play

The roles you take in children’s play should extend its value and increase children’s agency.

If you think carefully about the play that is occurring and the messages or cues the children are sending you, you will be able to consider the roles you can take during play. This process will help you to identify when it is time for you to exit or change your type of participation.

You might take on one of the following roles.

Play role	What you would be doing
Observer	<p>An observer watches, listens and tries to figure out what the play is about by understanding the children’s perspective and interests. An observer checks the children are challenged yet not frustrated.</p> <p>Careful observation means you are less likely to say or do something that disrupts children’s play, and you will have a better idea of what to say or do to extend children’s play if the opportunity arises.</p> <p>You may be an observer initially and then move into one of the other play roles.</p>
Provider	<p>A provider notes what the children are trying to do and then thinks about what can be provided so that play can proceed smoothly. For example, a provider may arrange:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ space for play ➤ special materials for play ➤ more time for play. <p>Careful provision means you will support the play and allow it to continue. You can also extend the play by giving children more to think about and do in their play.</p>

Play role	What you would be doing
Mediator	<p>A mediator helps children solve problems that occur in play when the children can't solve these problems themselves. This might occur when supporting a child who is frustrated.</p> <p>Watch for times when children get stuck. For example, when an argument threatens to stop the play, this is a cue for you to mediate. You can then:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ step in and make a suggestion ➤ offer an alternative ➤ model a new way to act to solve the problem ➤ support the children to work out a way to enable the play to continue. <p>You extend children's skills in problem-solving when you intervene to mediate, as children will often copy your problem-solving solutions in future play.</p>
Player	<p>A player joins in with the play. This seems to be the easiest role, but careful thought is needed before you join in. Adults can be actively involved in play as long as they respect that the play belongs to the children.</p> <p>Being a player lets you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ extend play by modelling new ideas ➤ assist new players to find a role ➤ help children act out scenes or ideas that they don't know much about. <p>A player also assists children to keep their play going for a longer period of time. Perhaps even more importantly, it strengthens the child-educator relationship, as the interaction allows both parties to learn more about each other.</p>

Changing roles

Often when you take on a role in play, something will happen during the play that means you must change your role.

The table below gives some examples of how you might change your role when you notice certain cues in the play.

Cues that tell you to change your involvement	What you should do	New role
Children are arguing, disagreeing, confused, tense or facing a problem	Help children to solve the problem	Mediator
Children are looking around or searching for things, or asking for materials or resources	Provide resources	Provider
Children ask you to play	Join in playing	Player
Play continues successfully	Allow play to continue	Observer or player
Items are not being cared for or are being used unsafely	Remove items that are not required or suggest alternatives	Provider or mediator

Cues that tell you to change your involvement	What you should do	New role
Play extends	Provide additional resources	Provider
Other children wish to join the group, but are not sure how	Support the children to join in or provide additional resources	Mediator or provider
You are playing with children, but your role reduces or changes and you are no longer needed	Remove yourself from play	Observer

Example

Extending play

Crispin, an educator, notices that Abraham and Jeanette, both three years old, are working beside each other using the train set. The children have built a long, winding track. Crispin hears the children talking about who will drive the train and realises it only has one engine and three carriages. He is aware that the children will both want to drive and have their own train, so he collects more train parts and brings them out.

‘Here, Abraham and Jeanette, there are many engines and carriages for you to choose from.’



Intentional teaching

The EYLF includes an explanation of intentional teaching as a practice that is deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful.

It may occur in a planned situation or be part of spontaneous learning. When you provide intentional teaching, you will be discussing, interacting and conversing with the child to extend their knowledge and skill. You will have considered how you can best support the child to reach a goal or understand a concept. You will be open to the children’s willingness to become involved and contribute.

Intentional teaching usually includes a plan of how to move from one understanding to another. This plan is organised and the process is as practical as possible. Intentional teaching may include scaffolding experiences or activities that assist a child to develop an emerging skill, or it may relate to a topic of interest to the child. Scaffolding means to provide support to the child to help them learn more.

Intentional teaching is useful for:

- teaching rules and guidelines
- helping children follow directions
- focusing on the development of specific skills
- supporting children to feel challenged, yet not frustrated.

However, be aware that intentional teaching may disrupt play-based experiences, particularly if it occurs at the wrong moment.

Example

Interrupting play

Carolina, an educator, watches toddlers playing with play dough. They are pounding and squeezing the dough.

Carolina wants to introduce the words 'pound' and 'squeeze' to the toddlers, so she approaches and says, 'Look, you are pounding the dough.'

The children stop what they are doing. Their concentration is broken. They notice Dustin running through the room and leave the play dough to chase him.

Carolina's intervention has stopped the children's play. She prioritised her interest in teaching new words over the children's interest in concentrating and building their skills and finger strength.

Instead, Carolina could have approached the play dough table and sat quietly for a while to gauge how intently the children were concentrating. This may have helped her make a decision about whether the children were open to interaction or intent in their learning.



Routines and intentional teaching

Routine times are excellent for intentional teaching.

During routines children are focusing on an activity and their emerging skills are easy to spot. Intentional teaching may occur spontaneously or as part of a plan. The following table provides some examples of intentional teaching during routines.

Routine	Examples of intentional teaching
Bathroom routine	<p>How to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ wash hands ➤ turn a tap on and off ➤ brush teeth. <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Where does the water go? ➤ Why do we use soap? ➤ What happens if we never brush our teeth?
Mealtime routine	<p>How to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ use a spoon ➤ use a knife ➤ use chopsticks ➤ set the table. <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Where do different foods come from? ➤ What makes a healthy menu? ➤ Which foods are grown and which are processed?

Example

Intentional teaching

Two children are building a spaceship out of blocks. The following shows two alternate scenarios of how Sandra, the educator, could have provided appropriate intentional teaching, or inappropriate teaching that interrupts play.

Appropriate intentional teaching	Interrupting play
<p>Sandra watches and listens as the children are building. She hears that they are building a spaceship. She does not want to interrupt their work, so she decides she will talk to them about their work later in the day.</p> <p>Sandra has realised that the children are learning skills from the task. If she observes that the children need her help, she may provide some intentional teaching around the situation.</p>	<p>Sandra approaches the play and says, 'That's a big tower. How many blocks have you used?'</p> <p>The children look at Sandra. 'It's not a tower,' they say.</p> <p>Although Sandra thought that this was a good time to teach the children about numbers, they are busy using other skills.</p> <p>Sandra's inquiry might make the children think she is not interested in their work.</p>

Interacting during play

Having fun in your job helps you to get the most out of your role and to create an environment and atmosphere that facilitates children's play, learning and physical development.

Enjoyment can be demonstrated by:

- showing enthusiasm, playfulness and happiness with the children
- valuing each child and giving them the warmth and attention they deserve
- finding out the things they enjoy and taking pleasure in their enjoyment
- celebrating their successes and special events
- helping children to laugh together
- sharing your leisure pursuits, where appropriate.

Children will appreciate your authentic and positive expressions and interactions, as this helps them enjoy their play more. Enthusiasm, playfulness and enjoyment are contagious – if your interactions reflect these emotions, children will become enthusiastic and playful, and find genuine enjoyment in what they are doing.

How you enjoy and value the children's play depends on the particular needs, interests and ages of the group.

The following table provides examples of the types of activities different age groups enjoy.

Age group	Showing enthusiasm, playfulness and enjoyment
Infants and toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Infants enjoy simple things like eating and being rocked and cuddled. They need simple bright toys to explore with all their senses. ➤ You can communicate enjoyment by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – singing and playing – going for walks and showing them everyday things, like watching the rubbish truck come or watering the garden – singing action songs – looking at picture books – labelling objects using single words – using non-verbal communication to show that you enjoy their company. ➤ Allow plenty of time for just looking at everyday sights.
Preschoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Preschoolers enjoy pretend play and dressing up. ➤ You can also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – enjoy music and dance – participate in physically active play – use quiet times to look at books – have discussions about things of interest – encourage children to collaborate in play – extend an idea. ➤ When providing them with the opportunity to paint, draw, construct and explore, encourage children with enthusiasm to increase their self-esteem. ➤ Preschoolers begin to enjoy jokes, nonsense rhymes, silly songs, poems and longer stories, which are usually easy to deliver in a playful and enthusiastic manner.

Example

Encouraging play

Mara notices Bradley standing near the wooden blocks watching the other children build towers. He is smiling but doesn't seem to want to join in. Mara approaches Bradley and he tells her he doesn't want to play with the wooden blocks as last time his tower fell over. He tells Mara that he loves making towers from his small blocks as it's easier. Bradley is excited when Mara provides small blocks and he invites some other children to join in. Together the group plan how to make the biggest tower and what they can do to make sure it doesn't fall over.





Practice Task 5

1. Draw a line to match each term about play and learning to the description.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Play invitations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Educators can demonstrate or discuss what to do and extend play through open-ended questions. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Intentional teaching | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Educators might be asked to participate in play. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Contributing to play | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Educators can give information, question, comment or provide materials. These actions respond to children's reactions and help them to remain interested and challenged. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Initiating play | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * This is most effective during routine times and can be used spontaneously or in a planned way throughout the day. It serves a purpose and is useful for a focus on development of new skills, following directions and learning rules and guidelines. |

2. Which of the following statements relate to facilitating play? Select all that apply.

- To demonstrate Quality area 5, educators should share children's enthusiasm for play and enjoy play themselves.
- Educators should take every opportunity they can to provide intentional teaching.
- Educators should extend play to make sure they are providing choices and meeting the different interests and abilities of each child.
- Educators should encourage children's agency as an important part of providing a quality play opportunity.

3B Reflecting on play

Reflective practice involves assessing your own practice as well as the play of children, then using the information you gain to improve.

It also includes discussing practice and play with others.

While delivering a holistic, child-focused program, take time to reflect on your practices by identifying what is being achieved in the play and learning environment and how you can achieve more. Reflect on areas and experiences children have been working on, and on your own style of interaction, discussion methods and knowledge of the service.



Take the time to reflect on your practice and on the play children are engaging in.

Critical reflection

Critical reflection occurs when you analyse and challenge the things you have done.

It allows you to assess the appropriateness of your thinking according to each experience and use this to inform your future actions and practices.

Critical reflection is an ongoing process of change, and is about noticing, changing and improving your practice.

When reflecting to identify learning and development outcomes, start by asking yourself these questions:

- What has been working well?
- What has not worked well?
- Who participated?
- Who did not participate?
- Were learning experiences age-appropriate?
- How could I extend on learning experiences?
- Was each learning experience effective and enjoyable for the children?
- What feedback have I received from children, other educators, families or others?
- How does this information affect my pedagogy (teaching practices)?

The most effective way to identify if you can improve your skills at planning for, entering and participating in play is to reflect on your day. You can reflect on:

- whether you play or just supervise
- how often you play
- what types of experiences you participate in
- how you become involved
- if and how you assist other children to become involved in play
- whether you demonstrate enjoyment in play with children.

This self-reflection allows you extend your abilities so you can try something new or identify a skill you could work on.

Regular evaluation

As you reflect on each experience, you will be evaluating it informally.

Regular evaluation occurs when modifying planned and unplanned experiences. To do this, you should:

- identify the appropriateness of the activity
- maintain children's agency
- modify to enable access and participation in play
- extend learning and play
- respond to emerging skills
- support areas of high interest
- ask other educators for their opinions.

This may require your use of simple recording styles that can be displayed in your evolving plan. You might use diaries, journals, photos, learning stories, discussion and other simple yet informative methods.

You will also be completing holistic evaluation of experiences at regular intervals. Depending on your service planning arrangements, you may complete more formal evaluation weekly or fortnightly. However, for some services, a daily evaluation might be expected. Regardless of the schedule, consistent use of evaluation enables you to provide suitable, engaging play and learning experiences.

Feedback from others

Other people can provide useful reflective feedback about your skills and knowledge, the play experiences you provide and on how you influence them.

By giving others opportunities to express their ideas, opinions, requests or thoughts, you are meeting both their needs and your own.

You could gather reflective feedback through informal conversations and discussions, or through surveys, meetings, questionnaires or forms.

Ways to gain feedback from others include:

- talking to people during visits, interviews, spontaneous discussions and meetings
- gathering feedback through suggestions, requests, communication books and apps
- holding meetings – uninterrupted time when information can be exchanged and discussed
- observing and listening
- contacting others by phone or email
- using social media such as Facebook or in-house programs or apps
- conducting verbal or written surveys
- asking people to complete templates or forms.

Challenging feedback

At times you may receive feedback that is negative or leaves you feeling hurt.

A discussion might upset you, or you may identify that a practice must be changed. Sometimes feedback may be given by another person who is inexperienced or has poor skills at providing feedback.

When this occurs, try to turn the situation around and think about what the person is really trying to say. Think about the message and what you can gain from the information. Try to identify the most important parts of the discussion and pick out what you can take from this. Remember to listen carefully at all times, ask questions, and respond in a way that demonstrates you understand the feedback and are taking it in a positive way.

Practice Task 6

Which of the following statements in relation to reviewing and evaluating play opportunities are correct? Select all that apply.

- Reflection relates to your own attitude. Looking at yourself holistically will help you develop the right play experiences for individual children.
- Further opportunities for learning and development can be identified if educators analyse outcomes to identify opportunities. This can increase if the team reviews, documents and discusses the process.
- Critical reflection can be tough. It means you have to be harsh with yourself and others, and make changes to your personality in order to support each child.
- Methods for evaluating the implementation of play experiences may include diaries, journals, photos or learning stories.

Summary

- Intentional teaching is deliberate and purposeful. It may include activities that assist a child to develop an emerging skill or it may relate to a topic of interest to the child.
- When you provide extensions to play, children remain engaged for longer periods and can also find a broader range of options for their play.
- To assist children to learn more through their play, take on the role of an observer, provider, mediator or player.
- When invited into play situations, remember the role you are taking and try to participate in a manner that suits the experience.
- You may initiate play for a variety of reasons, including in response to a child finding it difficult to participate.
- It is essential that you enjoy your job and have fun, and that this is communicated to the children.
- Working with children is not only about planning the play space, but also about changing the space in response to the needs, interests and reactions of the group.
- You need to critically reflect on play to respond to children's holistic needs and develop your pedagogy.

Learning Checkpoint 3

Facilitating ongoing play and learning



1. Draw a line to match the role of the educator during play to the actions of the children.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| * Provider | * The educator notices the children are playing in the home area. They are playing out the routine of the day. |
| * Observer | * The educator sees there are no kitchen supplies. She adds some kitchen utensils and a tablecloth. |
| * Player | * Both children want to cook breakfast. One of the children pushes the other out of the way. The educator says, 'It looks like only one person fits in the kitchen at once. Maybe someone can put the baby to bed? Do you think she has a special blanket?' |
| * Mediator | * The educator sits at the table. She smiles and asks, 'What are we having for breakfast?' A child gives the educator a plate and says, 'Here is your cereal.' |

2. The children decide to go outdoors with their doll to have a picnic. They need to apply sunscreen before they go out. Which of the following statements could the educator use to provide spontaneous intentional teaching during this routine? Select all that apply.

- 'Why do we need to wear sunscreen?'
- 'Do you know that my favourite colour is pink?'
- 'What would happen if we didn't put sunscreen on?'
- 'Can you still get sunburn during winter?'
- 'What do you want for your birthday?'
- 'What else can we do to protect us from the sun?'

3. Which of the following statements are correct in relation to children's play and the role of the educator? Select yes or no for each one.

- a. The activity setup in the home area was suitable for the children's interests and developmental needs. * Yes * No
- b. The educator recognised the opportunity to use intentional teaching and extended the children's learning by talking about what the doll might take to bed. * Yes * No
- c. The experience was set up with sufficient resources for the children. * Yes * No
- d. The educator has a pedagogical belief that it is important to be involved in children's play, which she has put into practice. * Yes * No
- e. From this experience the educator recognised that a child needs to develop their gross motor skills. * Yes * No
- f. The educator could write a learning story and use reflection to identify what to do next. The educator would be evaluating the play experience. * Yes * No
- g. The educators' interactions follow the requirements on Quality area 5. * Yes * No