

A Parent's Guide to Promoting Early Learning and Development at Home (0 - 5 years)

Supporting Families During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Dear Parents and Carers

April 2020

COVID-19 has led to the likelihood of a significant and unprecedented period of time at home for you and your children. MESHGuides have produced this booklet to support you in providing fun and engaging home learning opportunities. We aim to help you through this period and enable you to enjoy time with your child(ren) whilst helping them to learn through play.

Many of you will be familiar with the Early Years Foundation Stage[1] (EYFS), the UK framework followed by nurseries, childminders and reception classes. This guide aims to help you understand more about your child's development and behaviour by reflecting on the EYFS areas of learning. A range of learning opportunities are highlighted, these ideas show how play and positive interactions can promote effective learning in a fun and informal way. Engaging in fun experiences with your child could ease potential tension at home whilst enabling your child to be ready for their return to nursery or starting school in the future.

The guide also provides advice specific to the COVID-19 situation including top parenting tips, managing anxiety and helping children to develop positive personal hygiene routines that help to protect them from viruses.

If you would like to know more about age related expectations we recommend you use the Government endorsed document, *What to expect, when? Guidance to your child's learning and development in the early years foundation stage*[2]. If you are interested in finding out more about Early Childhood Education, more detail is freely available on the internet on the MESHGuides A-Z[3]. This knowledge is shared for the benefit of all children by teachers and other experts with experience in many countries.

Yours Sincerely,

Debra Laxton (Editor)
On behalf of MESHGuides

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Prime Areas of Learning & Development

Communication and Language	Physical Development	Personal, Social and Emotional
• Listening and attention • Understanding • Speaking	• Moving and Handling • Health and self-care	• Self-confidence and Self-awareness • Managing feelings and behaviours • Making Relationships

Specific Areas of Learning & Development

Literacy	Mathematics	Understanding the World	Expressive Arts and Design
• Reading • Writing	• Numbers • Shape, space and measure	• People and Communities • The World	• Exploring and using media and materials

Figure 1:EYFS Areas of learning & Development[1]



"The ways in which the child engages with other people and their environment – playing and exploring, active learning, and creating and thinking critically – underpin learning and development across all areas and support the child to remain an effective and motivated learner"

Figure 2[4]

Helping Your Child Learn

Children Learn through Play



Children need the freedom to explore and play as a child's development is influenced through the exploration, thinking, problem-solving and language expression which occurs during play. Play nourishes every aspect of children's development – it forms the foundation of intellectual, social, physical, and emotional skills. These skills support children in being ready for school and their future lives.

Parents Engaging in Play

As parents and carers you want the best for your children and for them to be ready for, and succeed when they start school. We know that the level of children's early learning rises when adults play with them. The quality of learning in play increases when adults join in. The joining in is different from controlling. Controlling makes children follow the adult's agenda and does not lead to as much learning as when adults follow the child's lead and interests.

Interactions (based on DCSF, 2009[5])

Parents have a crucial role in stimulating and supporting children to reach beyond their current limits, inspiring their learning and supporting their development. Research shows that an adult who interacts with children in particular ways to enhance their learning is a crucial ingredient in children making good progress. It is through the active intervention, guidance and support of caring, attuned and responsive parents that children make the most progress in their learning. This does not mean pushing children too far or too fast, but instead meeting children where they are, showing them the next open door, and helping them to walk through it. It means being a partner with children, enjoying with them the power of their play and curiosity and the thrill of finding out what they can do.

The ability to tune in accurately to meet children's needs and desires is easiest for parents who know their children better than anyone and from this point can interact sensitively and skillfully to support and enhance learning. This booklet provides ideas for developing play activities, and providing structured playful activities to enable your child to learn specific knowledge and skills through their own interests.

It can be difficult at times to judge how best to support your child's learning. At one end, too little support can limit learning. While play without adults can be rich and purposeful, at times it can become chaotic or repetitive which is then 'hands-on, brains-off'. At the other end of the scale, too much tightly directed activity deprives children of the opportunity to engage actively with learning. The best thing to do is organise the time, space and activities in your daily routine to reflect the overall combination which best supports children's well-being and learning.

- Take a little time to observe - what are the children playing? what are the roles and intentions?
- Consider whether you need to enter the play, and for what purposes (such as offering suggestions, introducing new ideas or vocabulary, managing the noise or behaviour, extending the activity through additional resources or negotiating entry for another child).
- Try to play on the children's terms by taking on a role that they suggest, and following children's instructions.
- With the youngest children, often participating alongside and imitating a child's actions with the same type of materials will signal that you are in tune and start a playful interaction.
- Offer your own ideas when you are sure that they are consistent with the flow of the play.
- Avoid asking closed questioning ('How many? What colour? What size?'). Instead, try to maintain playful ways of engaging by following children's directions, and tuning into their meanings.
- Try not to direct the play. Instead, be alert to the qualities of play, and to the knowledge and skills that children are using and applying.

Brain Development

Research[6] indicates that whilst the brain goes on developing throughout life, during the early years the brain develops fastest. For this reason, there is an emphasis on providing a wide range of activities that stimulate the development of the brain. These include experiences to their ability to communicate and problem solve, to form relationships and to be resilient as well as to develop fine motor skills i.e. the ability to use fingers to pick up, hold and manipulate objects and their gross motor skills i.e. large muscle development. This information is of vital importance and means that if you can provide a wide range of positive experiences, your child is more likely to be ready for a return to formal educational settings. These experiences do not require expenditure, rather they require carers/parents to introduce the child to the world around them through conversation, play with diverse objects available locally and through songs, rhymes and physical activity.



What are the Key Ways That Young Children Learn?[5]

Playing

Playing – indoors and out, alone and with others, quietly or boisterously – allows children to find out about things, try out and practice ideas and skills, take risks, explore their feelings, learn from mistakes, be in control and think imaginatively. Playing is an important centre of learning for young children.

Being with other people

As well as developing emotional security and social skills, being with other people – other children and adults – stimulates ideas and involvement that move learning forward.

Being active

Young children need to move, and learn and remember things by taking experiences in through the senses as they move. Sitting still for too long can disrupt learning.

Exploring new things and experiences

Children's deep curiosity leads them to use all their senses to explore in real hands-on activities, and then put the information together in their own minds to form ideas and make sense of the world.

Talking to themselves

In 'self-speech' children use out-loud thinking to clarify their thoughts, regulate their activities, take on imaginative roles and rehearse their skills.

Communicating about what they are doing with someone who responds to their ideas

Even before they can talk in words, children are keen to share their ideas through sounds, gesture and body language. Talk helps children to understand what they experience. It is important that they have a chance to express their own ideas, as well as have conversations to hear other people's ideas, extend their thinking, and use language about learning.

Representing ideas and experiences

Children deepen their understanding as they recreate experiences or communicate their thinking in many different ways – in role-play or small world play, pictures, movements, models, and talk.

Meeting physical and mental challenges

Working out what to do, trying hard, persevering with problems, finding out and thinking for themselves are opportunities for developing real understanding. These challenges may occur in play, or in real-life or planned activities.

Being shown how to do things

Children learn skills by watching others or being shown how to do something. Adults or peers may directly instruct, model, guide or demonstrate.

Practising, repeating, applying skills

Rehearsing skills in similar tasks or new contexts helps children to build mastery, to enjoy their own expertise, and to consolidate what they can do.

Having fun

There is no place for dull, repetitive activities. Laughter, fun, and enjoyment, sometimes being whimsical and nonsensical, are the best contexts for learning. Activities can be playful even when they are not actually play.



Promoting Communication and Language

"Communication and language development involves giving children opportunities to experience a rich language environment; to develop their confidence and skills in expressing themselves; and to speak and listen in a range of situations"[1]. *"The most fundamental life skill for children is the ability to communicate. It directly impacts on the ability to learn, to develop friendships and on their life chances"*[7].

TOP TIPS (Adapted from MESHGuides[8] & The Communication Trust[9])

- **Value talk** - Be an active listener, fully engage with what your child has to say and show you value their contribution.
- **Wait, watch & wonder** – children will often initiate conversation if given the time, pondering e.g. I wonder statements are less threatening than direct questions. Children are more relaxed and more likely to respond[10].
- **Thinking time** – young children need time (up to 11 seconds) to process before responding[5].
- **Foster positive attachments with your child** - If they feel safe and comfortable and know you care about them they are likely to want to communicate with you.
- **Avoid asking too many questions** – Instead hold a conversation. When you do ask questions make these open and purposeful.
- **Allow children to lead play and follow their interests** – engaged, excited learners will want to tell you about their play and exploration.
- **Use a sing song voice (Motherese) with babies** – easier for babies to distinguish sounds/ tune in[6].
- **Use commentary** – model language through describing what children are doing[4].
- **Use Gestures** – in conjunction with spoken language to capture interest and support understanding.
- **Repeat children's language** – using correct pronunciation and extending vocabulary/ sentences as appropriate.

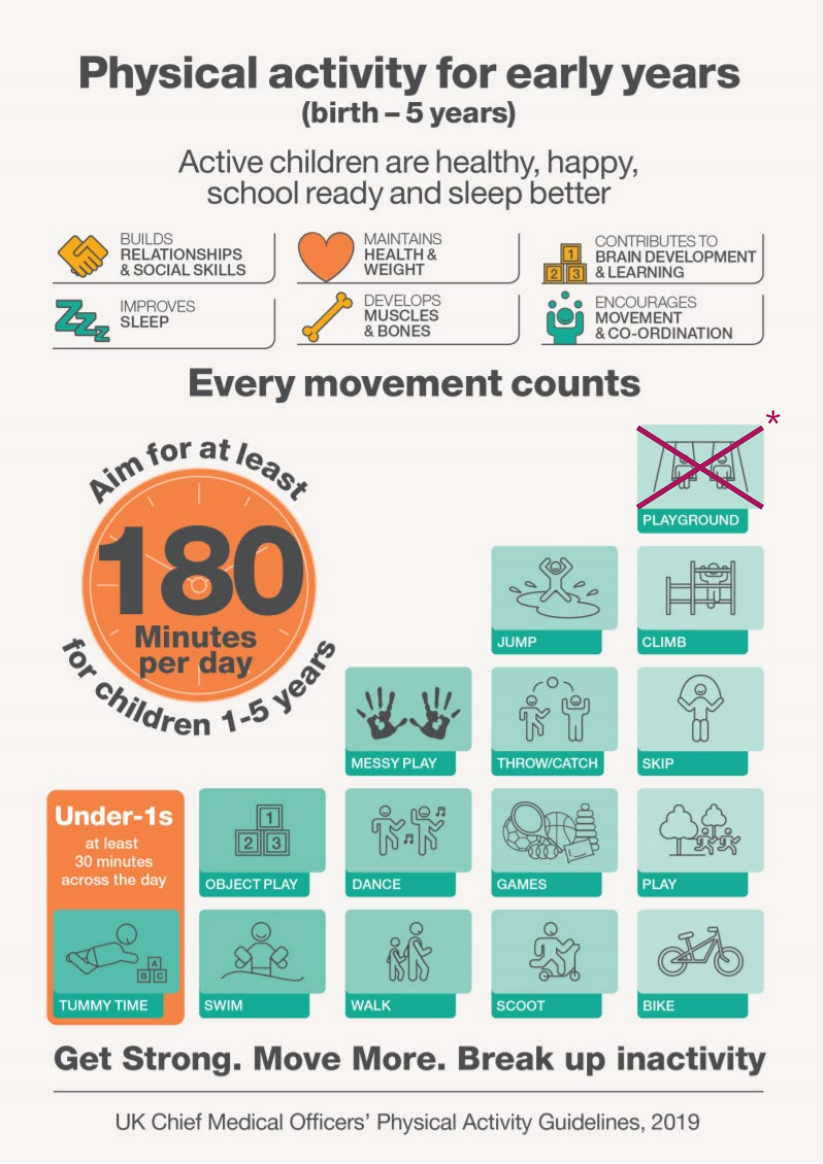


- **Follow interests** - Talk about what your children are interested in. This will mean they are much more motivated to speak.
- **TV Time** - If you let your child watch TV, watch it with them (as much as possible). It's an excellent way to spark off conversations and learn new words.
- **Quiet times** - It's really important to always remember that children need quiet time where you turn off background noise and have time just to play. This is really important for listening and language development.
- **Use technology** - Keep in touch with relatives or friends they are separated from at this time e.g. e-mail, send photos, video chats to keep in touch and use it as an opportunity to ask your child what they might want to ask and say.
- **Explore photos** - can your child remember the story behind the photo? See if you can find a similar photo of when you were young. Talk about the differences and similarities – this exercise is great for sharing stories, which are so vital for communication development.
- **Turn technology off** - model putting your own devices to one side. Communication technology is great, but face-to-face conversations are most important for developing speaking and listening skills and are most rewarding.
- **Using these tips** alongside the activities in this booklet will promote communication and language.

Promoting Physical Development

"Physical development involves providing opportunities for young children to be active and interactive; and to develop their co-ordination, control, and movement. Children must also be helped to understand the importance of physical activity, and to make healthy choices in relation to food"[1].

Exercise is essential to maintaining mental and physical health. Whilst challenging with minimal outdoor time being allowed at the present time, it is important to be inventive and find ways for children to partake in vigorous physical activity wherever possible in your garden and/or indoors dependent on the space available.



*N.B. Due to the current pandemic public play spaces are closed

Figure 3: Guidance from the Chief Medical Officers in the UK on the amount and type of physical activity[11]

Physical Development Aspect: Moving and Handling

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Animal Moves	• Discuss how different animals move to encourage your child to move in different ways e.g. jumping, running, hopping, skipping, galloping, sliding, crawl	• Move freely and with pleasure and confidence in a range of ways
Balance & Control	• Provide ways to promote your child's balance. This can be as simple as providing a line of tape on the carpet/ plank on the ground in the garden. You can increase the challenge by suggesting they try backwards, sideways, tip toes, hoping etc • Controlling movement especially stopping and starting when moving fast is hard when you are young. Play games like musical statues/ bumps to support this • Balancing on one leg N.B. Children are likely to have a favoured side so use both. You can time using stopwatches and try to improve personal best	• Gain increasing control and co-ordination of large movements • Moves with increasing confidence in a range of ways appropriate to their age • Learn to safely negotiating space.
Dancing	• Encourage children to use their imagination when moving to a variety of music genres e.g. turning, twisting, freezing, stretching, curling, landing and pivoting	• Travels with increasing confidence and skill • Improves negotiation of space
Long & High jump	• Make this a competition against siblings or you as the adult and/ or encourage them to improve their personal best • Measure the length they jump using standard and non-standard measures (see mathematics section) • High jump can be from two feet together and a leap frog jump	• Gain increasing control and co-ordination of large movements
Skipping rope games **NEVER LEAVE CHILD UNATTENDED**	• Jumping a wiggling rope – adult to wiggle one end and tie the other end to an object. Make up songs/ guessing games while you play • Learn to skip with a rope (older children) • Find more games here[13] https://www.todaysparent.com/family/activities/6-fun-ways-to-jump-rope/	• Moves with increasing confidence in a range of ways appropriate to their age

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Assault and obstacle courses	• Model these inside or out. Consider what you can use to encourage your children to move in different ways and challenge their capabilities • Allow children to create their own courses	• Travels with increasing confidence and skill around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment
Using tools and equipment **NEVER LEAVE CHILD UNATTENDED**	• See ideas under the Literacy (Writing) and Expressive Arts and Design (Exploring and using media and resources) sections • Woodwork is great and children are so careful with real tools! • Cooking	• Develop the capability to handle equipment and tools effectively
10 Minute Shake Up games	• Disney & Change4Life have joined forces to give these Disney clips to accompany 10-minute bursts of energy[13] https://www.nhs.uk/10-minute-shake-up/shake-ups	• Travels with increasing confidence and skill

Table 1: Activities to Promote Gross and Fine Motor Skills

Physical Development Aspect: Moving and Handling

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Recipes, Menus & Cooking	• As appropriate to the age allow children to make choices about snacks from a range of healthy options and explain in appropriate terms what healthy foods are and why • Create a menu for the week and model/ discuss having a balance of food type	• Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food
Workout	• Try the 'Joe Wickes PE Lesson' online[14] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGKGNzNbWjU	• Shows some understanding that good practices with regard to exercise
Yoga	• Try Cosmic Kids Yoga Online Cosmic Kids Yoga[15] https://www.youtube.com/user/CosmicKidsYoga	• Shows some understanding that exercise can contribute to good health
Change for Life	• Explore this NHS page for tips and ideas about food facts, recipes, activities and your child's weight[16] https://www.nhs.uk/change4life • Select ideas to share with and motivate your family	• Eats a healthy range of foodstuffs and understands need for variety in food
Time to let them try	• Use your time with your child to slow the pace and nurture their independence and improve their social skills e.g. dressing and feeding themselves, managing small responsibilities like watering plants or setting the table • Allow them to think for themselves by making choices and decisions • Value your child's input, encourage them to voice their thoughts, opinions and ideas	• Manage their own basic hygiene and personal needs with growing success
Toilet Training	• See 'ERIC's guide to potty training' by the Children's Bowel & Bladder charity[17] https://www.eric.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=cad20060-c174-4566-afcd-25f0087614a4	• Become dry and clean during the day and then the night
Handwashing	• There is a designated page related to this, later in the booklet	• Talk about ways to keep healthy and safe

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]

Personal safety	• Talk to child through daily activities about how to keep safe:
	  • Managing tools and equipment safely
	  • Stranger danger
	  • Road safety
	  • Sun safety
	  • Safe relationships and the underwear rule[18] https://parentinfo.org/article/start-talking-pants
		• Shows a developing understanding of the need for safety when tackling new challenges, and considers and manages some risks
		• Shows understanding of how to transport and store equipment safely with increasing competence
		• Talk about ways to keep healthy and safe

Table 2: Activities to Promote Health & Self-Care

Promoting Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Personal, social and emotional development involves helping children to develop a positive sense of themselves, and others; to form positive relationships and develop respect for others; to develop social skills and learn how to manage their feelings; to understand appropriate behaviour in groups; and to have confidence in their own abilities[1].

Promoting Personal, Social & Emotional Development

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Attachments	• The relationship you have with your child is key to their self-esteem and identity • Openly show your child love and affection • Be sensitive, consistent & responsive to changing needs • 'Tune in' so you understand your child's point of view and can be genuinely empathetic • All the points below will help to foster a secure attachment	• Trust you and other adults • Separate from you knowing you will return and others will substitute the care they need
Listen & Value	• Value your child's input however insignificant it may appear to you. This makes a difference to the child who feels acknowledge and empowered	• Confident to speak to others about own needs, wants, interests and opinions
Realistic expectations	• Allow your child to succeed by providing realistic, consistent boundaries that are clearly explained • Challenge your child within their limits and they are likely to strive to achieve. Too higher expectation can mean your child moves to a panic zone that is overwhelming and demotivates	• Can describe self in positive terms and talk about abilities
Positive Role Model	• Demonstrate your confidence and also share times you are unsure so that children realise it is okay to feel this way • Children learn how to behave and what to expect from you • Praise your child and this will impact on self-esteem and they will learn to praise others. Children need to hear much more praise than criticism to be confident, strong learners	• Welcomes and values praise for what they have done
Learning from mistakes	• Allow your child the chance to get things wrong. This is how we build resilience and work out ways to overcome challenges • Share times this happens to you too	• Shows confidence in asking adults for help

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
The old and the new	• Children love repeating positive, familiar experiences, they need new experiences and challenges too	• Expresses own preferences and interests • Explores through play with developing confidence and independence • Shows confidence in asking adults for help
Exploration and no wrong	• Allow children to play freely often. Where there are no strict rules and you can't do it wrong e.g. block play, play dough. This allows the child to engage with and increase confidence	• Can select and use activities and resources with help and later growing independence
Time to let them try	• See Physical development: Health and Self-care section above	• Enjoys responsibility of carrying out small tasks

Table 3: Activities to Promote Self-Esteem



Personal, Social and Emotional Aspect: Managing feelings and behaviour

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
The Language of Emotion	• Model the language of emotions to discuss how you feel and to comment on how they and others may be feeling • Encourage your child to talk about how they feel • Use visual prompts e.g. simple emoticons, drawing faces, stories to aid understanding	• First to express feelings, then identify them, then manage feelings and finally empathise with how others may feel
6 steps to conflict resolution	• Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions • Acknowledge your child's feelings • Gather information • Re-state the problem • Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together • Be prepared to give follow up support	• Negotiate and resolve conflict with increasing independence • Talk about how they and others show feelings
Puppets, dolls and soft toys	• Use puppets and soft toys to model conversations and to encourage your child to talk (it is often easier for them to talk 'through' something else) • Use these to address sensitive issues as they arise • Use the puppet to model responding to others' feelings	• Development of empathy • Develop an understanding that own actions can affect other people • Talk about how they and others show feelings
Routines	• Try to provide a routine • Within the routine allow for calm, quieter times • Within the routine ensure children have opportunities to explore sharing • Allow children to help where appropriate e.g. making beds	• Feel safe and secure • Time to reflect • Can take turns and share resources
Use stories, mirrors and photos	• Stories often have a moral or a journey of emotion within them • Discuss the feelings and why the characters may have those feelings • Pull faces in the mirror together that reflect emotions and talk about these • For young children identify feelings from faces	• Talk about how they and others show feelings
Pretend Play	• Provide opportunities to dress up and act out scenarios so that children have the opportunity to explore feelings and experiences and feel safe to do so	• Talk about how they and others show feelings

Table 4: Activities to Promote Positive Behaviour

Personal, Social and Emotional Aspect: Making relationships

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Attachment	• This is of paramount importance • See under Self-Confidence and Self-Awareness section	• To build secure attachments with main carers • To trust adults
Time and attention	• Set aside times each day to give your child your whole attention and play with them • Create time to sit and chat	• To build secure attachments with main carers • Form positive relationships with others
Sharing opportunities	• Whether this is sharing raisins at snack time or playing a simple board game these can be fun learning experiences	• Fairness • To turn take and share • To co-operate
Books, puppets, photos	• Talk about your own family • Explore families and discuss different kinds of families	• Sensitivity towards others • To make sense of their world and see the world from other's point of view
Pretend Play	• Allow the child to act out their lives and others	• To make sense of their world and see the world from other's point of view
Video chat	• Use technology to reach out to friends and family that your child may not be able to see face to face	• Form positive relationships with others

Table 5: Activities to Promote Positive Relationships



PSE COVID-19 Specific Advice

HELPING CHILDREN COPE

Your children may respond differently to an outbreak depending on their age. Below are some reactions according to age group and the best ways you can respond:

AGE GROUP	REACTIONS	HOW TO HELP
PRESCHOOL	Fear of being alone, bad dreams Speech difficulties Loss of bladder/bowel control, constipation, bed-wetting Change in appetite Increased temper tantrums, whining, or clinging behaviors	Patience and tolerance Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime Maintain regular family routines Avoid media exposure

Figure 4: COVID-19 Support for Children from NCTSN[19]

Top Tips to Promote Positive Behaviour

- **Build a loving relationship**
- **Be positive** - focus on the positive and provide specific praise that highlights what your child does well. They will be likely to repeat this then. Rewards can be useful to support key behaviours e.g. toilet training but for a child to feel the warmth of a hug or valued word from those they love most shouldn't be under estimated.
- **Positive role model** - always remember children observe and copy the actions and behaviours of those closest to them.
- **Be realistic** - know that what you are expecting your child to manage is appropriate for their age and capability. Be aware that this changes for example when tired or hungry your child is less likely to manage their feelings as well as at other times.
- **Make boundaries clear** - discuss them. Have consistent expectations of behaviour related to these.
- **Reasonable consequences** - these can support understanding of appropriate behaviour. It is important to remember that positives MUST outweigh negatives for the child to feel nurtured, valued and to have a positive self- image. All of these are vital for managing behaviour.
- **Remain calm and in control** - this should prevent escalation.
- **Following ideas above** - the tables in this section provide ideas to support your child in understanding feelings, becoming confident and making relationships. All these will support your child in becoming emotionally literate and learning to understand and display socially acceptable behaviour.

Promoting Literacy

"Literacy development involves encouraging children to link sounds and letters and to begin to read and write. Children must be given access to a wide range of reading materials (books, poems, and other written materials) to ignite their interest"[1].

Literacy Development Aspect: Reading

The building blocks for reading come from speaking and listening. Activities for building listening skills will aid children's Literacy development by helping them to tune into the rhythm of speech and the sounds in words. When children have well-developed listening and speaking skills they will be able to progress at their own pace to learn about letters and sounds. This is called 'phonics.' We read by recognising sounds within words (decoding) and we write by placing those sounds together to form words (encoding).



Activities to Encourage Listening Skills for Early Reading (Adapted from Letters and Sounds[20])

Children need to be able to distinguish between general sounds before they begin to link specific sounds to letters.

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Evironmental Sounds	• Explore the sounds of different objects around the house. Try adding spoons to pots and pans and small objects to empty containers to create new sounds • Set a timer for one minute and open the window or walk around a room. What sounds can be heard? • Making homemade instruments such as shakers out of recyclable materials	• To develop children's listening skills and awareness of sounds in the environment
Songs and Rhythm	• Sitting opposite your child, demonstrate clapping loudly and quietly, asking them to follow your lead. Then let your child be the leader. Develop this further by asking them to copy a rhythm • Sing songs which use body percussion such as "Pat-a-Cake" or have a strong rhythm to move or dance to such as "The Grand Old Duke of York"	• To distinguish between sounds and to remember patterns of sound • To recognise and create rhythms
Stories and Rhyme	• Find stories which rhyme and allow a pause before the end of the sentence to allow your child to finish the rhyme. • Create a rhyming nickname for the name of each member of the household	• To develop children's awareness of rhyme

Table 6: Activities to Encourage Sound Discrimination

Activities to Encourage Linking Sounds to Letters for Reading

If your child has started to learn the sounds and names of letters in an early years setting or school environment you might want to speak to their teacher's to find out which letters and sounds they are currently learning. Phonics is most effective between 5 - 7years old and children do not need to learn to link sounds to letters before this point unless they are showing a particular interest.

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Finding New Sounds	• Find a collection of objects or toys which all start with the same sound e.g. a snake, scissors, scarf and spider. Place them into a bag or box and then let your child pull them out and play with them whilst you emphasise the initial sound e.g. S-nake • Encourage your child to try to draw the new sound in the air and on the floor with their fingers, on large paper or on the ground with chalk if you have access to an outside space • Play 'I spy' focusing on one sound in particular. Provide clues if needed • Play 'sound detectives' -look in books for a particular sound or letter	• Identify initial sounds in words • Link initial sounds to objects
Sound and Letter Games	• Musical statues- place some letters on the floor and play some music. When the music stops, call out a sound or letter and your child runs to that letter • Place some post it notes with letters on the fridge and your child matches magnetic fridge letters to the post-it	• Recognise and create rhythms
Name reading	• Provide opportunities for your child to see their name written down regularly. Perhaps in a special place or somewhere they often sit. Refer to this if your child is attempting to write their name • Point out other objects or people who start with the same letter as their name	• Recognise letter in their own name

Table 7: Activities to Promote Sound Awareness

Literacy Development Aspect: Writing

The building blocks for writing are physical development, particularly fine motor skills. Before a child can hold a pencil, they need to develop strength and control in their hands. They also need to have developed self-confidence and the ability to persevere to attempt this new skill.

Activities for Early Writing

Children need to gain confidence when beginning to create marks on paper. It is important that all attempts to write are encouraged by adults and in the early stages this may look like a 'scribble' which the child assigns meaning to by calling it a 'list' or 'writing'. Children will be more likely to make marks and attempt to write letters if they see adults regularly writing too rather than typing. Writing does not need to be on paper to be worthwhile and it is often better for their confidence to start encouraging them to form the shapes of letters in less permanent ways such as the air, using their finger to trace through materials or using a paintbrush with water.

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Pretend Play	• Placing any paper, notepads or other writing materials near to your child whilst they are playing pretend games e.g. When pretending to be a doctor, children can pretend to 'write' a prescription • If your child is already starting to write letters or words, encourage them to write words or sentences as part of their play. e.g. creating signs for a pretend shop	• Assign meaning to marks they make
Name writing	• Start with the first letter rather than the whole name • Encourage your child to practice writing their name on drawings or artwork they create. Encourage all attempts	• Form letters in their name
Exploring materials	• Providing a range of materials such as rice, mud, shaving foam, sand and flour to draw letters in with their fingers or a paintbrush. Encourage hand washing before and after and do not keep materials for re-use	• Practice forming recognisable letters

Table 8: Activities to Encourage Writing

Useful websites to help motivate your child to read and write and have fun!

- https://www.jollylearning.co.uk/school-closure-support-for-parents/ - a video demonstration for parents of how to pronounce the letter sounds
- https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/reading/early-reading-skills-age-3-4/ - including a video from Julia Donaldson (Gruffolo author) with early reading tips
- https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCllFxIfCNYQvsRepWxT7n8A - The Oxford Owl at home YouTube channel has lots of story time sessions for children
- https://new.phonicsplay.co.uk/ - free to parents/ carers during the outbreak. Phase 1 games to be played on computers or iPad can be found here as well as phase 2/ 3 for those children in reception missing phonics lessons
- https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/the-baby-club - free show which focuses on nursery rhymes and stories for babies and younger toddlers



Promoting Mathematics

"Mathematics involves providing children with opportunities to develop and improve their skills in counting, understanding and using numbers, calculating simple addition and subtraction problems; and to describe shapes, spaces, and measure"[1].



Mathematical Development Aspect: Numbers

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]

Use everyday situations to develop mathematical language & thinking	• Use counting and ordering in everyday situations e.g. climbing stairs, building blocks, getting dressed:
	  • Spot numbers in the environment e.g. on labels
	  • Play practical games that enable counting, adding and taking away, estimating e.g. setting the table
	  • Encourage children to 'keep score' when playing mentally or using a tally system
	  • Talk about Birthdays - dates and months to understand simple numbers and share dates
	  • Use your child's interests to engage them in mathematical thinking
	  • Use snacks as opportunities to discuss amounts and sharing e.g. half, fair, more, less
		• Number names in sequence
		• Develop an interest in numerals
		• Make comparisons between quantities
		• Show an interest in representing numbers
		• Recognise numerals of personal significance, sequencing
		• Identify & solve own mathematical problems e.g. halving and sharing language of counting

Writing Numerals	• Encourage mark making in number writing and representations • Encourage number writing for a purpose in play e.g. football numbers, car registrations, taking the register	• Number recognition • Experiment with symbols/ marks representing ideas of number • Match numeral and quantity
Hand/ Finger Play	• Encourage children to match their fingers and or toes to numbers • Put hands behind backs and count together, one, two, three, four, five. Bring out hands with the correct number showing	• Estimates how many objects they can see and checks by counting them • Ordering number names

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Small world play	• Provide resources and model counting. Count groups of objects in different layouts • Provide small world play from familiar stories, giving reasons for counting and encourages number talk	• Develop concepts of sets and similar amounts • Use language 'more' and 'fewer' to compare sets of objects • Organise and categorise objects • Knows that a group of things changes in quantity when something is added or taken away • Know that numbers identify how many objects are in a set
Number hunt	• Hide numbers around the house and/or in the garden • Encourage your child to find these, match similar numbers and order numbers • You can also have objects that can be counted to match the numeral to	• Match numerals • Number recognition • Order numbers • Match numeral and quantity
Pretend Shop Play	• Discuss the idea of creating a shop with your child • Set up the chosen shop with your child, price objects (low amounts), have real coins • Have mark making resources available to encourage writing of words and numbers • Play with your child, allow them to lead and swap roles	• Organise and categorise objects • Number recognition • Money has value • Uses everyday language related to money e.g. cost, change, price, total
Number songs	• Source number songs online to have a variety and allow familiarity to build before adding a new song • Sing together and use actions wherever possible	• Develops an awareness of number names • Develop understanding of number and counting forwards and backwards • Use the vocabulary involved in adding and subtracting
Number Lines	• Provide number labels and number lines for children to use and refer to in their play • You can use string (never leave your child alone with this) with pegs that your child can explore by moving numbers around	• Number recognition • Order numbers

Table 9: Activities to Knowledge & Understanding of Number

Mathematical Development Aspect: Space Shape & Measure

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Positional language games	• Use small world toys (like dinosaurs) and teddies or yourselves • Talk about position e.g. where is it? where am I? • Model vocabulary e.g. behind, inside, on top, in front of	• Positional language
Matching & Sorting Games	• Provide a wide range of natural objects and materials as well as general toys that motivate children to naturally match, sort and categorise	• Categorise objects according to properties such as shape or size
Heuristic play/ Play with natural objects	• Provide children with a range of age appropriate objects e.g. buttons, shells, fir cones, milk bottle lids and various containers to explore	• Exploration will allow children to think and learn across mathematical concepts e.g. size, shape, sorting, properties
Pattern Play	• Opportunities to observe and explore patterns e.g. drawing, bead threading, • Point out patterns around the house e.g. shapes and colours on bedding (red flower, purple square, red flower, purple square)	• Notice shapes and patterns in pictures • Recognise, create and describe patterns
Exploring Weight	• Provide opportunities for children to explore weight e.g. make a balance (to go up and down) • Cook using spoons and cups as measures as well as kitchen scales • Weigh yourselves using bathroom scales. • Encourage thinking around weight in everyday situations e.g. mine is heavier, are they the same weight?	• Uses language of weight with increasing accuracy
Exploring Time	• Provide opportunities for children to measure time e.g. use a sand time to measure 2 minutes of teeth brushing • Set a timer when cooking with children or to model when you are cooking • Discuss times of the day e.g. morning, before snack time, 5 minutes time • Talk about yesterday, today, tomorrow	• Understands some talk about immediate past and future • Uses language of time with increasing accuracy
Exploring and Measure	• Use objects (non-standard measures) to measure length e.g. the chair is 6 spoons long, the flower pot is 2 sticks high • Provide standard measures to e.g. rulers, tape measures for exploration • Opportunities to explore space with their bodies e.g. crawling in spaces	• Uses language to measure with increasing accuracy • Orders by length • Uses standard and non-standard measures

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Use everyday situations	• Use everyday situations to encourage mathematical thinking, vocabulary and problem solving • Use descriptive words like 'big' and 'little' in everyday play situations and through books and stories	• Discussions will allow children to think and learn across mathematical concepts e.g. size, shape, sorting, properties
Exploring shape	• Provide shape hunts inside and outside • Encourage building using blocks, construction kits, recycled materials • Model correct shape language • Discuss the properties of shape e.g. a dice has 6 faces • Feely bag of different shaped objects for guessing from the feel	• Uses shape names • Identifies shapes accurately • Names shapes accurately • Uses mathematical terms to describe shapes
Bath time capacity	• Provide different sized containers, jugs, funnels etc. for filling and pouring • Model language e.g. empty, full, half full/ empty	• Explores capacity • Uses language with increasing accuracy

Table 10: Activities to Promote Knowledge and Understanding of Space, Shape and Measure

Useful websites to help motivate your child to become a mathematician and have fun!

- NRICH provides thousands of free online mathematics resources for ages 3 to 18, covering all stages of early years, primary and secondary school education - completely free and available to all[21]: https://nrich.maths.org/13373
- NCETM & Numberblocks a programme on youtube available here[22]: https://www.ncetm.org.uk/resources/52060
- Erikson Institute: Early Math collaborative. Focus on Play videos here[23]: https://earlymath.erikson.edu/series/focus-on-play/
- MESHGuides/ VSO: Maths Games at Home[24] https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLa35dKvXL0xKFwATyOAjOvkz2VHIzcGQ2 https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLa35dKvXL0xL3WzGOWctNuctQEOkhcl84

Promoting Understanding the World

"Understanding the world involves guiding children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places, technology and the environment"[1].

Understanding the World Aspect: People and Communities

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Using artefacts and pictures	• Go through the photograph album or look at picture online – sequence those pictures in age order to begin an understanding of chronology • Make a picture narrative of the day to develop sequencing and to develop words relating to the passing of time. As you proceed through a day take some pictures and then by downloading a simple animation app you can make a film of your day • Look at pictures of family groups and create a memory box of important family members including pets. Ask family members to send pictures of them on special occasions when they were young e.g. birthday – see if you can spot similarities and differences in the pictures between present day birthday celebrations and those from the past[25] • When outside look at the different types of houses and see if you can spot houses that are older • When outside look out for distinctive windows and features like chimneys that indicate the age of a house – for instance, can you find pictures of different door knockers or letterboxes[26]	• Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members • Develop an understanding of how some things change but also how some things continue despite the passing of time • Spotting similarity and differences and change over time • Spotting similarity and difference and change over time

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Story	• Use story time to develop sequencing ... many books aimed at young children have plenty of references to time passing • Read stories that challenge stereotypes, for example where all family types are discussed as opposed to a traditional nuclear family • Make picture cards of your favourite stories and then try and place them in the correct order or after reading story try and recount all the important events Go out on a walk with a digital camera and take pictures of curious or old objects that are encountered on the walk. Use these as a basis for a simple story	• Children talk about past and present events in their own lives and in the lives of family members • They know about similarities and differences between themselves and others, and among families, communities and traditions • Develop chronology and sequencing • Spot objects from the past and develop historical imaginations

Table 11: Activities to Support Children in Understanding Themselves, Families and Communities

Understanding the World Aspect: The World

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Home activities	• Do a daily weather check and log the weather • Travel with Barnaby Bear to different geographical locations using[27]: https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/z9grd2p/resources/1	• Children observe changes in their environment • To understand how different environments are similar or different
Garden or exercise activities	• Make a log of change over time by noting changes in the garden – spring flowers • Go on a minibeast hunt in the garden • Log and name different plants • Plant some seeds and watch them change over time • Make a very simple picture map of a favourite play park • Make a plan of your house • Using a digital camera take pictures of different street furniture that you pass • Identify different characteristic of houses in the community e.g. flats, cottages, terraced housing, bungalows	• Children make observations of plants and animals • Know about features of your own environment • Develop early geographical language

Table 12: Activities to Support Children in Observing, Exploring & Investigating the World Around Them



Understanding the World Aspect: Technology

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Story	• Look at a range of interactive storybooks, those that have lift the flaps or moving parts	• Recognise how technology is used for particular purposes
Technology and Play	• Challenge children to manoeuvre a toy in a more precise manner. A remote-control car can be a good way to do this – construct a pretend car park out of toy bricks and ask children to park in different spaces. This can be accompanied by the use of directional language • Encourage children in their play to switch, and click play materials so they can see they can make things happen e.g. use play phones, play walky-talkies, play supermarket cashiers	• Understand how to control technology for a purpose
Technology in your Environment	• Make a list of all the different appliances in a house that can be controlled. Discuss how the technology controls equipment, e.g. a washing machine, a microwave, a printer • Make a sound quiz using an audio recorder - at the end of the day see if you can recall the origin of the sounds • Use Google Earth or Google Street view to look at your own environment • Use webcams to monitor events outside the home. Many zoos now have webcam set up to enable public audiences to observe animals	• Recognise technology in the environment • Select and use technology for a particular purpose

Table 13: Activities to enable Children to Explore and Learn About a Range of Technologies

Promoting Expressive Arts and Design

"Expressive arts and design involves enabling children to explore and play with a wide range of media and materials, as well as providing opportunities and encouragement for sharing their thoughts, ideas and feelings through a variety of activities in art, music, movement, dance, role-play, and design and technology"[1].

Expressive Arts and Design Aspect: Exploring and Using Media and Materials

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Be a Role Model	• Ensure children are able to observe you engaging in these activities and following their lead	• To confidently explore and purposefully design and create
Mark making	• Provide a range of implements e.g. pencils, feathers, fingers, chalk to explore making marks on a range of materials e.g. paper, soil, sand	• Experiments with blocks, colours and marks • Understands that different media can be combined to create new effects • Uses simple tools and techniques competently and appropriately
Design and Create Models and Collages	• Use available materials e.g. fabrics, recyclable materials, boxes, tubes, cartons, bottle tops, card, paper with arrange of separating and joining tools e.g. scissors, string, glue to make model	• Moves from exploration and experimenting to selecting and uses specific tools safely for appropriate tasks • Understands that different media can be combined to create new effects

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Exploring malleable materials	• Allow children time, space and freedom to explore different malleable materials e.g. playdough, cornflour, custard powder, sand, mud • Use these materials without tools in order for children to understand their properties, opportunities to construct and design using materials without tools e.g. by squeezing, pressing, pulling, rolling, pinching, poking, stretching, tearing, moulding, etc. • Then use materials with tools. Allow children to observe you using and exploring available tools so they can make choices about what to use and when	• Explores and experiments with a range of media through sensory exploration • Describes the texture of resources • Uses various construction materials • Show interests in exploring materials and describes these • Manipulates materials to achieve a planned effect
Observational Drawing/ Painting	• Provide natural objects and materials e.g. feathers, shells, leaves, ice, mini-beasts, plants and seeds for children to touch, explore, talk about and draw • As above with manufactured objects and materials e.g. scarves, fabric, plastics, metal	• Manipulates materials to achieve a planned effect
A range of Painting	• Painting with different sized brushes on different sized paper and other materials • String painting and butterfly prints – Add string to the paint pull out and place on the paper. Make patterns and shapes, fold the paper to make a symmetrical pattern • Hand and feet printing • Fruit and vegetable printing • Bubble painting – add washing up liquid to the paint and the children can blow coloured bubbles using straws and capture on paper	• Experiments with blocks, colours and marks • Explores what happens when colours are mixed • Describes the texture of resources
Explore Music	• Play a variety of music from classical to pop • Sing familiar nursery rhymes and songs and introduce new ones. • Play sounds from around the world • Move, clap and dance to music	• Builds a repertoire of songs and rhymes • Moves rhythmically • Moves from spontaneous movement, to copying and planning movement to music

Table 14: Activities to Encourage Exploration and Expression

Expressive Arts and Design Aspect: Being Imaginative

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Music & Movement	• Resources to stimulate spontaneous movement e.g. fabrics, scarves, feathers, ribbons • Add music of varied sound and tempo	• Expresses self through physical action and sound
Pretend Play	• Provide the opportunity for meaningful imaginative role play with other family members • Clothes or costumes that suggest a character and specific movement response • Resources and props to stimulate symbolic play e.g. boxes, blocks, fabrics that can represent whatever your child wants them to be	• Expresses self through physical action and sound • Pretends that one object represents another • Initiates new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences • Create simple representations of events, people and objects
Small world play	• Provide resources children to play imaginatively with small figures, animals and resources to extend the imaginative play and creative thought	• Expresses self through physical action and sound • Create simple representations of events, people and objects
Imaginary Worlds	• Encourage your child to use their interests to create imaginary spaces e.g. dens can become homes or caves, small world resources like water toys can lead to pretend underwater spaces being created	• Pretends that one object represents another • Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play • Create simple representations of events, people and objects
Story telling & Scribing	• Encourage children to create their own stories and tell these to you to scribe. Then act these out together • Over time, repeating this activity regularly can lead to children telling complex stories, acting these out and wanting to write their own stories eventually	• Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play • Create simple representations of events, people and objects

Activity	How adults can support	Learning[12]
Sharing stories and rhymes	• Tell your child stories and rhymes introduced in a range of ways, including traditional and modern ones as well as made up songs and stories by adults	• Expresses self through physical action and sound
Explore music & sound	• As described above • Lead opportunities for children to move in a variety of ways e.g. roll, slide, swing	• Expresses self through physical action and sound • Initiates new combinations of movement and gesture in order to express and respond to feelings, ideas and experiences
Puppet & Stage Shows	• Make puppets using ideas from above and from socks, bags • Allow your child to experience performance by staging made up productions of stories, puppet shows and dance • Engage family and friends via video messaging • Record and replay to allow your child to reflect and consider how to perform next time	• Expresses self through physical action and sound • Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play

Table 15: Activities to Encourage Representation of Ideas, Thoughts and Feelings

Useful websites to help motivate your child and have fun!

- Ages & Stages: Imagine & Pretend[28] https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/ages-stages-imagine-pretend/
- Music Development Matters – Lots more musical activity ideas here for 0 – 5[29] https://www.early-education.org.uk/musical-development-matters-download

Specific Ideas to Promote Baby Development

- As the parent you are the most important feature of your baby's world. They would rather be held by and play with you than any toy or resource. As they get older they become more interested in the world around them and manipulating objects but you remain the most significant thing in their lives.
- Enjoy this time with your baby and build a trusting, loving bond that lasts a lifetime.
- Be sensitive and responsive to your baby's needs and provide a routine that meets these needs. This is how they learn to trust you.
- Hold them often and always to feed them. Give your baby your full attention and put any electronic devices to one side so neither of you are distracted when feeding. A baby can make out the human face from the distance between your face and the baby nursing.
- Babies quickly work out that they prefer the faces of their main carers – you.
- Baby massage can be relaxing for parent and child. Find out how here[30]: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IwwmorKTyfQ
- Talk to your baby about anything and everything as you share the world around you with them. Babies quickly learn to 'talk' back and will turn take in conversation with you if you allow them the time and respond to their coos and babbles.
- Exaggerate your facial expressions and use a sing song voice. Babies will find this easier to tune in to and begin to understand.
- Be positive around your baby, smile and show joy.
- Sing to them.
- Dance with them.
- Read books and tell stories to them from the earliest opportunity.
- Play interactive games with your baby e.g. peek-a-boo.
- Mirror games – babies are fascinated by reflections and enjoy exploring. Eventually they learn they are separate to you and they recognise their own face.

- Babies respond to contrasting colours (black and white) and bright colours, sound and light. Be alert to noticing these and other things that interest them e.g. moving trees so you can respond and extend their interest.
- Tummy time – as part of the daily routine give your baby plenty of opportunity for physical exercise.
- Playful, relaxing bath times. Initially sing and soothe and then add playful objects for exploration and fun.
- Introduce interesting safe objects that they can grasp and chew to allow sensory and motor development.
- Once your child is able to sit up and manipulate objects create a treasure basket for them to explore. These provide an amazing resource of natural objects recognizing the sensory limits of plastic toys. Find out more here[31]: https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/features/article/home-learning-a-parent-s-guide-to-treasure-basket-and-heuristic-play



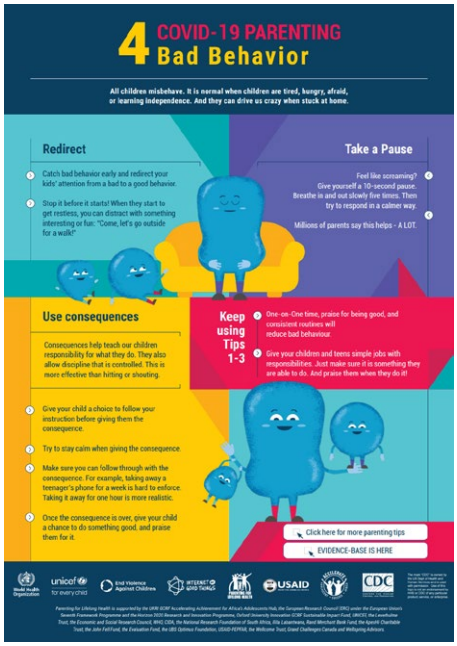
- During weaning allow your child to explore the food – this is a sensory experience and often the start of mark making. When ready give them a spoon to start the journey to independence.

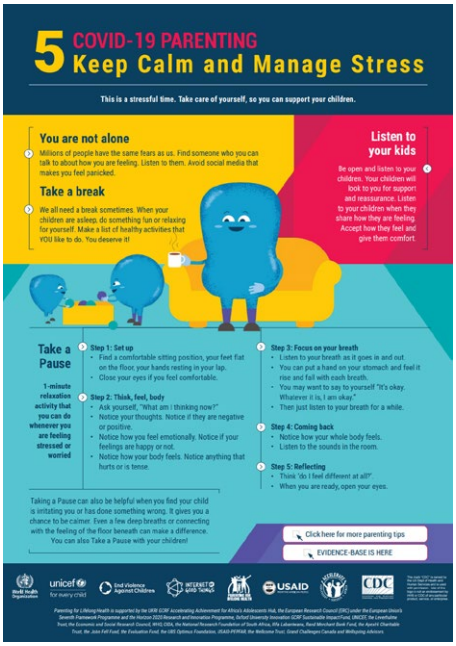
COVID-19 Six Parenting Tips by UNICEF

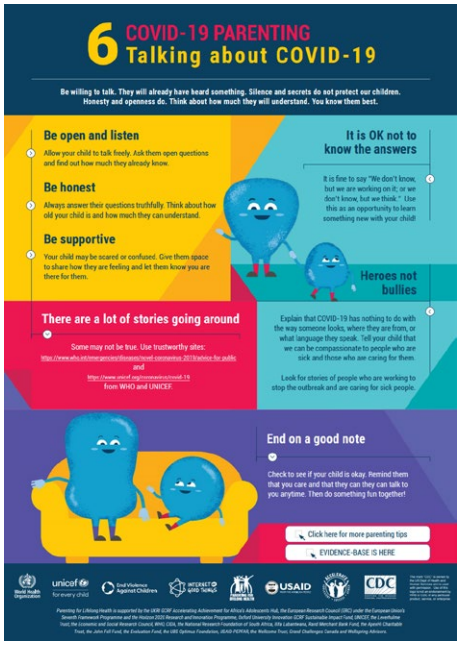






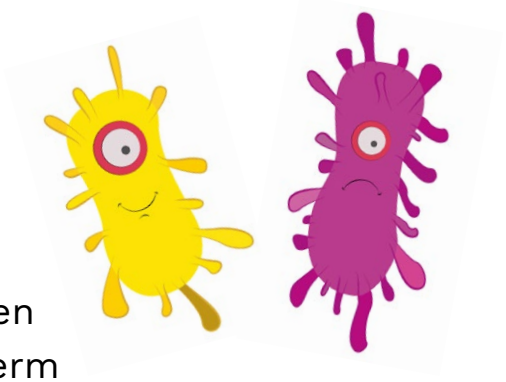




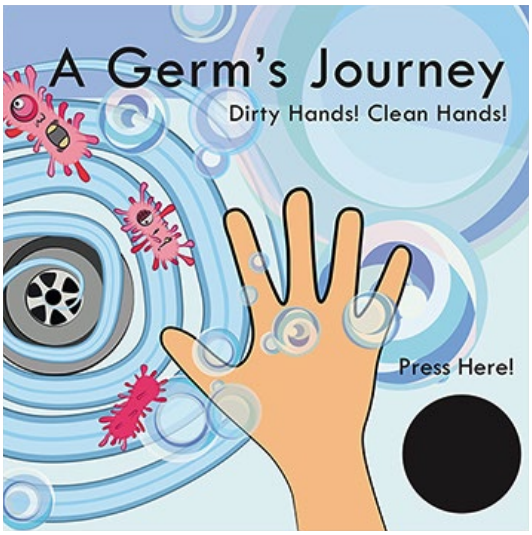


https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/covid-19-parenting-tips

Germ's Journey

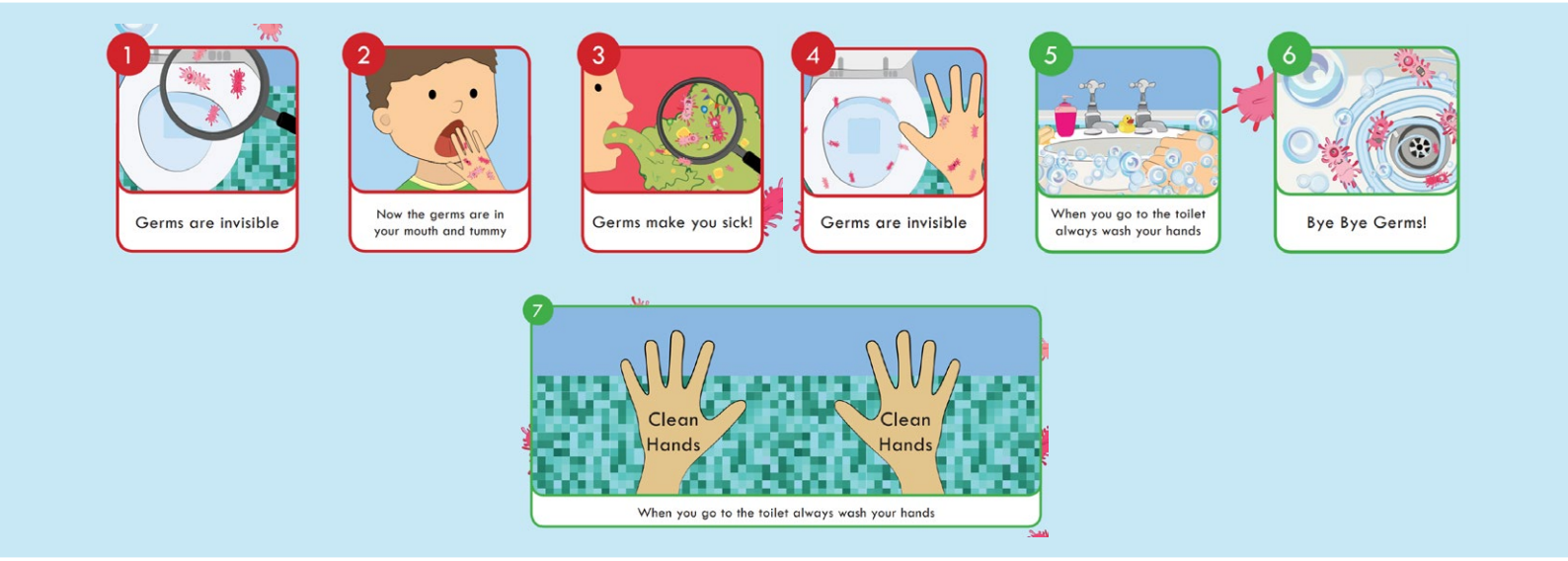


A Germ's Journey educational resources were initially developed by an interdisciplinary UK research team (co-founded by Dr. Katie Laird and Prof. Sarah Younie) in order to engage young children in health-hygiene and aid their understanding of germ transmission and infection prevention through the use of specifically developed interactive learning resources. Through fun and interactive education Germ's Journey teaches young children the importance of handwashing for their own health and well-being. The mission is to make A Germ's Journey Educational Resources freely available at-the-point-of-access to children, educators and healthcare workers around the world.



The A Germ's Journey book follows the journey of a germ using unique heat-sensitive pages and combining interaction, play and learning, showing pre-schoolers the importance of clean hands. The book also contains information at the back for parents, carers and teachers to encourage discussion and scaffold the children's learning (this information can also be accessed via the downloadable parent/ teacher guides on the website). Following its success of improving children's knowledge and handwashing practice in the UK and India[32] [33], a further two culturally relevant books have been co-created for India and West Africa alongside children, teachers and academics in-situ.

Further educational resources include a website and online games (www.germsjourney.com[34]) alongside a set of set of interactive workshop activities including: colouring pages, handwashing songs and a glow-gel handwashing activity. Other resources include: culturally relevant posters, parent/teacher guides with information and discussion points, handwashing songs and a 'funky facts germ game', an interactive activity designed for young children that involves reading different facts on individual germ characters and deciding whether they are 'good' or 'bad' germs.



A MESHguide has been developed for Germ's Journey, which gives teachers quick and easy access to all of the resources and research behind the Germ's Journey work, all presented in an innovative online flowchart summary. Please visit: http://www.meshguides.org/guides/node/729[3]

Downloadable resources are free-at-the-point-of-access and available on the website: www.germsjourney.com[34]

To keep up-to-date with the project, make sure you're following our social media pages too: Twitter - www.twitter.com/germsjourney, Instagram - @germsjourney, Youtube - A Germ's Journey

A Germ's Journey book available at: https://medinapublishing.com/books/a-germs-journey/

Hand Washing

'One of the most efficient ways of encouraging handwashing in young children is through school-based activities as well as specifically being taught the importance of correct handwashing by parents/ teachers[35]. Children are most susceptible to contagious illnesses 'due to underdeveloped immune systems, and regular engagement in behaviours such as putting their fingers in their noses and mouths'[36]. Despite parents'/teachers' efforts to encourage handwashing, most young children lack the knowledge and motivation to wash their hands properly; yet approximately one-third of infections could be prevented by improving hand-hygiene practices[36] [32].

Handwashing Song/Video

A Germ's Journey has developed a range of resources, specifically to encourage correct handwashing practice, one of which is a handwashing song/video. The Germ's Journey Team worked collaboratively with Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum to develop an educational handwashing song that presents a step-by-step guide on how to wash hands, emphasising the areas of the hands that are often missed when handwashing.



Handwashing Poster

A step-by-step handwashing guide has been developed as a visual aid to show the correct handwashing technique.

Soaper Heroes Posters





The Soaper Heroes posters are a set of posters that can be placed in various places in bathrooms and act as visual prompts for using soap, drying hands etc. Our recent research has shown that in unfamiliar settings, children are not using soap and drying hands so frequently, so attractive visual prompts are useful tool to encourage this.

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