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0 to 4 years

# LEARNING AT HOME



Department of  
**Education**

Activities and fun ideas to help your children learn at home. For parents/carers of young children.



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**TITLE:** Learning at home – 0 to 4 years: Activities and fun ideas to help your children learn at home. For parents/ carers of young children.

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## LEARNING AT HOME

### **Your children's brains are a 'work in progress!'**

In the first few years of life, the brain grows rapidly. The experiences you have with your children during these years are extremely important. By creating a fun, happy and safe home, you are helping them develop a love of learning.

### **How children learn best**

Children learn best when they are happy, feel safe and have interesting things to see and do. The everyday activities you share with your children are powerful learning opportunities.

There is no need for you to formally 'plan' for learning at home – it will happen naturally through simple activities, experiences, games and reading that you share each day with your children.

Children are naturally curious, full of ideas and keen to learn about the world around them. They learn by playing, watching, listening, asking, talking, having time to think, trying and doing new things, and watching the responses of the people around them.

This booklet has lots of things you can do at home with your children to support their learning and development.

## CAPTURING LEARNING MOMENTS

Learning happens through everyday experiences such as home activities, going for walks and exploring your neighbourhood. Make the most of these moments with your children.

For example, when hanging out the washing, you could talk about the types of clothes, sort the items, count the number of pegs and talk about colours. This helps children develop concepts and learn new words.

### What can I do?

- Make learning fun.
- Follow your children's interests and choices – and build on them.
- Give your children time to solve problems and repeat things.
- Be positive, patient and supportive.
- Teach them to watch, listen, think and question.
- Listen to your children and give them a voice.
- Let your children decide when they need help – avoid 'taking over'.



### Play is child's work

Play is a powerful and natural way for children to learn. Through play children develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively (intelligence). Play involves climbing, making cubby houses, dressing up, pretending, dancing, writing, counting, doing puzzles, drawing, reading, imagining, building things, making choices, exploring materials, testing ideas, developing confidence, sharing with others... and so much more!

### What can I do?

- Let your children play every day.
- Encourage your children to make up their own activities and games.
- Have cardboard boxes, balls, buckets, spades, everyday household items and dress up clothes around to play with.
- Make tidying up part of the fun – allow for mess for a while during play.



## READING EVERY DAY IS FUN – AND IMPORTANT

Children enjoy being read to and sharing books is a great way to spend time with your children. It also helps to expand their vocabulary and to see that you value reading.

### What can I do?

- Tell stories, say and sing rhymes, poems and songs. Make up actions.
- Talk about the words and numbers you see when you're out and about.
- Read to your children from newspapers, junk mail, electronic devices and magazines, as well as books.
- Read a wide range of things – these can include printed books and stories on electronic devices.
- Read favourite stories over and over.
- When reading to your children, follow the words with your finger, point to pictures and talk together about the story.
- Let your children pretend to read. Children pretend to read by making up the story. This is a great start.
- Show your children how to look after books such as turning the pages carefully.
- If your children are not showing interest in a particular book, don't push them.
- Avoid distractions when you are reading with your children – for example, turn off the television.
- Visit your local library and ask about the programs they run for parents and children.



## LEARNING ABOUT THE WORLD

The world is an exciting place full of things for your children to wonder and discover. As your children begin to observe and experiment, join with them and explore the home, garden and neighbourhood together.

When your children ask *Why?* and *How?* they are learning to think critically.

### What can I do?

- Encourage your children to ask questions. Talk, act and think through problems.
- Ask your children questions. Discuss their answers and ideas.
- Help your children discover the world around them and experiment with everyday objects. For example: *Why do some things float and others sink in the bath? Where does rain come from? How do spiders make webs?*
- Share activities like making play dough and blowing bubbles.
- Talk with your children about the technology we use each day and why we use it.
- Spend time building with your children using everyday objects, blocks and toys.

## LEARNING TO FOCUS AND CONCENTRATE

Games are a fun way to help your children develop their ability to focus and concentrate.

### What can I do?

- Hide different objects outside and around the house. Have fun finding them together.
- Sort things by size, colour and shape, like blocks, food packaging, toys and pegs.
- Play *What's on the plate?* Put an item on a plate. After they have looked at the item, ask your children to close their eyes and then ask *What's on the plate?* Increase the number of items to two, three and four. Have them look at the plate each time before closing their eyes and then ask them *What's on the plate?* See how many items they can remember. Take turns. Put three items on a plate – take off one. Guess which one is missing.
- Sing nursery rhymes and songs such as *Old McDonald had a farm* to develop counting and memory skills.
- Find words beginning with *b* and other letters when you go shopping together.



## WAYS TO DEVELOP MATHS, READING AND WRITING SKILLS

**Children learn maths, reading  
and writing as they play.**

### What can I do?

- Play 'shops' with items from the kitchen using shopping bags, purses and play money.
- Make a scrapbook with drawings, photos, certificates, birthday cards, letters and tickets from places you have visited together.
- Write events on the calendar such as birthdays and special celebrations and talk about these with your children.
- Make birthday cards, thank you cards and invitations to send to family and friends.
- Have a space for your children to scribble, write and draw. Use scrap paper, textas, crayons, pencils, old envelopes and cards.
- Display your children's drawings and talk about the drawings with them.
- Have a message board and write messages to each other. You can turn daily tasks into fun learning times.
- Cook simple things together. Read and talk about recipes. Give your children simple directions to follow.
- Encourage your children to find ingredients in the kitchen and measure them.
- Cut food and talk about size, shape, colour and taste.





## Shopping

- Write shopping lists together. Ask your children to 'read' back items on the list as you shop. Get them to help you find items they know.
- Count fruit and vegetables as you put them in bags.
- Talk about the different types of money such as coins, notes and cards.
- Let your children give the money and collect the change at the checkout. Help them scan items or search for fruit and vegetables when using self-serve checkouts.
- Unpack and sort the shopping at home together. Talk about the size and shape of items as you put them away.

## RAISING HAPPY CHILDREN

Children growing up in supportive, trusting and safe homes are more likely to be happy and confident, and enjoy being with others.

Children with high self esteem feel valued and respected. When children trust those who care for them, they develop a sense of belonging and grow in confidence to explore, learn and make friends.

### What can I do?

- To build your children's self esteem, spend time with them talking, playing and being happy.
- Encourage your children's attempts when they try new things and tell them often that you love them.
- Encourage your children to make friends, share play opportunities, and display drawings and constructions they have created.
- Ask for their opinions and act on their ideas where appropriate.
- Help your children become problem solvers – don't do everything for them.
- Lead by example to help your children learn good behaviour – model being appreciative and grateful, for example saying thank you.
- Help your children learn to relax.

- Learn about feelings by talking with your children about how they are feeling. For example: *You seem happy...sad...scared.*
- Talk about how others may feel. For example: *How do you think Harry will feel if someone takes his toys? You made Harry feel happy when you shared your toys with him.*
- Listen to your children. Be aware of what they say and do. What are their actions telling you?

### Guiding children's behaviour

Children need guidance and clear, consistent boundaries to learn to make good choices in life. Children learn about rules in the home and in the community. They develop an understanding of consequences when rules are not followed. Your children also need to feel safe and secure while they are learning rules.

Children's behaviour varies for a number of reasons. It is how we respond to their behaviour that is important.

Feelings are an important  
part of your children's social  
and emotional development.



**Catch your children being good – don't wait for them to do something wrong before you comment on their behaviour. Focusing on negative behaviour gives children attention and may reinforce wrong behaviours. Rewarding good behaviour with a hug and a comment gives your children attention for the right reasons and promotes good behaviour.**

### What can I do?

- Be clear and consistent, and always carry through on rewards and warnings.
- Consider your children's ages and abilities. Make sure what you are expecting of them is reasonable.
- Tell your children what you want them to do and explain why. For example: *Please hold my hand while we cross the road because I want you to be safe.*
- Give your children choices. For example: *You can hold on to my hand or the pram while we cross the road. What would you like to do?*
- Praise your children when they follow your instructions and be clear about what they did well. For example: *I like the way you held my hand while we walked to the other footpath.*
- Model good behaviour and lead by example. Behave how you want your children to behave.
- Think about what you will do should your children not behave correctly. Talk with other parents about ideas for managing behaviour.
- Be patient. Learning new things takes time. Respect their needs and feelings.

For more information, contact your local school or Child and Parent Centre.

## HEALTHY BODY, HEALTHY MIND

You are your children's most important role model. The best way to make sure your children develop healthy habits is to lead by example.

Research shows that eating well, being active and getting plenty of sleep are essential to children's health and wellbeing.

Good foods give children the nutrients to grow, develop, concentrate and learn well.

Children should be physically active and, with your encouragement, this is not difficult to do.

Being active helps your children develop:

- social, language and communication skills
- posture, movement, balance and flexibility
- self esteem and self confidence
- muscles, healthy bones and a healthy heart.

**Make sure your children  
drink plenty of water when  
exercising and playing.**



## What can I do?

- Feed your children a healthy breakfast every morning.
- Give your children different foods during the day to cover the five food groups. Use different colours, textures, shapes and flavours to keep meals and snacks interesting.
- Water is the best drink for your children.
- When preparing meals, ask your children to help with the preparation using fresh ingredients you have chosen together.
- Walk instead of driving the car whenever you can.
- Play outside and at the local park.
- Take a family bike ride or go for a walk and play games as you go.

## Sleep right, sleep tight

Children don't always like bedtime and going to sleep, but did you know that children between the ages of three and five need between 10 and 13 hours sleep each night? A restful sleep helps your children restore energy. It is important to maintain a daily sleep schedule and consistent bedtime routine.

**If you are having problems getting your children to sleep well, visit the doctor or your local child health nurse.**

**Bedtime stories are helpful to get children ready for sleep. Use different voices for different characters. Reading the same book often helps children remember the storyline.**

## FUN AND LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY

### Television and other electronic media

When used in the right way to prompt conversations, to learn about the world or for short-term relaxation, television, DVDs and electronic games can be beneficial to your children. However, too much exposure may be harmful.

Screen time can affect your children's word development, listening and concentration. Watching television and playing electronic games is one-way communication. Two-way communication involves listening, talking and thinking with other people.

### Kids online – how to be cyber safe

The internet opens a window to a world of fun and learning. Children aged from two to seven years are old enough to begin to learn about computers and explore the internet with support and supervision.

Keep the computer in the family area where you can see what your children are doing.



### What can I do?

- Limit all screen time to less than one hour a day.
- Turn off the television when no one is watching.
- Choose programs with your children that suit their age group.
- Allow your children to watch the same DVD again and again. Repetition of phrases and words can make it easier for your children to learn.
- Join your children in watching television and DVDs. Talk about what happens.
- Don't place televisions and computers in your children's bedrooms.

# SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

## Child and Parent Centres

To help your children get the best start to life so they begin school ready and eager to learn, visit one of our 16 Child and Parent Centres located throughout Western Australia.

Child and Parent Centres provide a range of education, health and social support programs for families such as:

- maternal and child health services
- early learning and child support programs
- referrals to other services
- parenting and family support, including Triple P (Positive Parenting Program).

Each centre is located at a public school giving you easy access to their facilities. It also gives your local school and surrounding schools the opportunity to work with you from the time your children are born through to starting school and beyond.

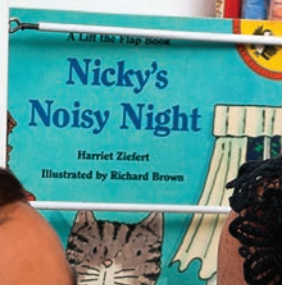
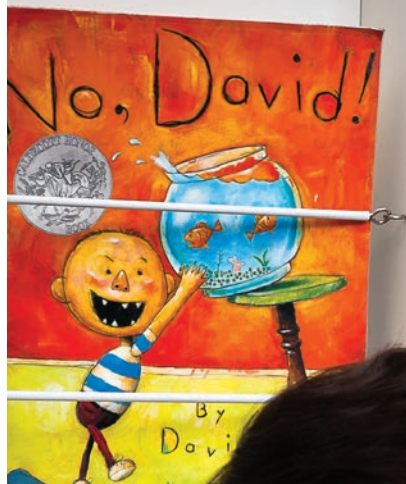
The centres are managed by community organisations and are open to all young families in the local community. Programs are tailored to make sure the services needed most in the area are widely available.

To find out more about Child and Parent Centres and to find your nearest centre, visit **[education.wa.edu.au](http://education.wa.edu.au)**.

## Get involved in a playgroup

Many schools have links with local playgroups where parents with young children regularly meet to play and learn together in a fun environment. Ask at your local school or go to **[playgroupwa.com.au](http://playgroupwa.com.au)** for playgroups in your area.





## STARTING SCHOOL

### Getting involved

Schools value strong partnerships with families. As your children's first and most significant teacher, you continue to influence your children's learning as they progress through school. Your children's success at school will develop from a three-way partnership between you, the school and your children. You also have a lot to offer your children's school.

## Starting Kindergarten

Kindergarten is an exciting place. It is the first experience your children have of school.

The teacher encourages children to further develop their wonder and excitement of learning, exploring and imagining. Above all, the teacher wants to encourage children to experience a lifelong interest in learning.

Kindergarten, while not compulsory, is available for all children and regular attendance is highly recommended as it builds on the learning you have done at home together.

Kindergarten programs are 15 hours a week. Speak with your local school to find out how its Kindergarten program is run.

Most schools invite parents to an orientation day/session. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about the program and participate in organised activities.

**To enrol, children must be four years old by 30 June in the year they attend Kindergarten.**

Our online booklets and factsheets include information about what to expect and how you can support your children as they start their school journeys. For more information, visit [education.wa.edu.au](http://education.wa.edu.au).

## Starting Pre-primary

Pre-primary is the first compulsory year of schooling in Western Australia.

Here your children build on the skills they learnt in Kindergarten and learn in a more structured way.

In Pre-primary, children are assessed on their literacy and numeracy skills. This on-entry assessment helps teachers plan the best learning programs for your children's needs.

**To enrol, children must be five years old by 30 June in the year they attend Pre-primary.**

## Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)

The AEDC is an Australian-wide census completed by Pre-primary teachers that gathers information on five key areas of children's development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills
- communication skills and general knowledge.

The information collected is reported at national, state/territory and community levels. Individual information about children remains confidential. The AEDC is collected every three years.

For more information visit [aedc.gov.au](http://aedc.gov.au).

Your children are likely to be excited about starting school, but may also find it a little overwhelming.

Here are simple and practical ways you can help them get ready for school:

- Read stories with your children about starting school.
- Join a playgroup that has links with a school – more and more schools are developing partnerships with parent-run playgroups where your children can play with other children of a similar age.
- Go past the school and talk with your children about how they will soon be going there, the exciting things they will do and the friends they will make.

### When can my child start school?

Birth year	Kindergarten	Pre-primary	Year 1
1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011	2015	2016	2017
1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012	2016	2017	2018
1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013	2017	2018	2019
1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014	2018	2019	2020
1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015	2019	2020	2021
1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016	2020	2021	2022
1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017	2021	2022	2023
1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018	2022	2023	2024



For online resources such as booklets and factsheets and to discover more about the early years of education, Kindergarten and Pre-primary visit your local school or go to **[education.wa.edu.au](http://education.wa.edu.au)**.



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