

The Early Years Teams Top Tips – Play:

Encourage exploration and curiosity

Allow your child to explore their environment in a safe way. Simple activities like investigating textures, shapes, or different objects help them develop problem-solving skills and curiosity.

Use everyday moments as learning opportunities

Engage your child in daily routines like cooking, cleaning, or shopping. Counting objects, naming colours, or discussing what you're doing helps them build cognitive connections in real-world settings.

Use cause-and-effect toys

Toys that create reactions, like pop-up toys or musical instruments, are excellent for developing play skills. They help children understand that their actions lead to results, building early problem-solving and focus.

Provide open-ended play materials

Offer toys that encourage imagination and problem-solving, such as blocks, stacking toys, or pretend play sets. These toys allow children to experiment and develop critical thinking skills.

Encourage problem-solving through questions

Ask open-ended questions to encourage your child to think critically. For instance, if they are trying to fit a puzzle piece, ask, "Where do you think this piece might go?" rather than giving the answer directly.

Use repetition for learning

Repeating activities or stories reinforces learning. If your child enjoys a particular story, reading it lots of times helps them remember information, recognize patterns, and understand sequences.

Create sorting and matching games

Sorting activities, like grouping toys by colour or size, help build organising skills. You can also create matching games with objects or pictures to encourage memory and logical organization.

Incorporate sensory play

Sensory activities like playing with sand, water, or dough stimulate brain development by allowing children to explore different textures and physical properties, enhancing their understanding of the world.

Demonstrate play skills

Show your child how to play with toys by modelling actions like rolling a car, stacking blocks, or feeding a doll. Many young children, especially those with additional needs, benefit from seeing how to play.

Celebrate small achievements

Acknowledge your child's efforts and progress in learning. Praise encourages them to persevere and builds their confidence, helping them face and attempt challenges.