



**CHCECE036**

**Provide experiences to  
support children's play  
and learning**

**LEARNER  
GUIDE**



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## This Learner Guide

### **CHCECE036 - Provide experiences to support children's play and learning (Release 1)**

This unit describes the performance outcomes, skills and knowledge required to set up, support and review experiences for children's play and learning.

This unit applies to educators who support children's learning according to established curriculum under the guidance of others in regulated children's education and care services in Australia.

The skills in this unit must be applied in accordance with Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation, Australian standards and industry codes of practice.

No occupational licensing, certification or specific legislative requirements apply to this unit at the time of publication.

**A complete copy of the above unit of competency can be downloaded from the TGA website:**

<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/CHCECE036>

## About this Unit of Study Introduction

As a worker, a trainee, or a future worker, you want to enjoy your work and become known as a valuable team member. This unit of competency will help you acquire the knowledge and skills to work effectively as an individual and in groups. It will give you the basis to contribute to the goals of the organisation which employs you.

It is essential that you begin your training by becoming familiar with the industry standards to which organisations must conform.

## This Learner Guide Covers

Provide experiences to support children's play and learning

- I. Create environments for play
- II. Support children's agency through play and learning
- III. Review and evaluate play opportunities

## Learning Program

As you progress through this unit of study, you will develop skills in locating and understanding an organisation's policies and procedures. You will build up a sound knowledge of the industry standards within which organisations must operate. You will become more aware of the effect that your own skills in dealing with people have on your success or otherwise in the workplace. Knowledge of your skills and capabilities will help you make informed choices about your further study and career options.

## Additional Learning Support

To obtain additional support you may:

- Search for other resources. You may find books, journals, videos and other materials which provide additional information about topics in this unit.
- Search for other resources in your local library. Most libraries keep information about government departments and other organisations, services and programs. The librarian should be able to help you locate such resources.
- Contact information services such as Infolink, Equal Opportunity Commission, Commissioner of Workplace Agreements, Union organisations, and public relations and information services provided by various government departments. Many of these services are listed in the telephone directory.
- Contact your facilitator.

## Facilitation

Your training organisation will provide you with a facilitator. Your facilitator will play an active role in supporting your learning. Your facilitator will help you at any time during working hours to assist with:

- How and when to make contact,
- what you need to do to complete this unit of study, and
- what support will be provided.

Here are some of the things your facilitator may do to make your study easier:

- Give you a clear visual timetable of events for the semester or term in which you are enrolled, including any deadlines for assessments.
- Provide you with online webinar times and availability.
- Use 'action sheets' to remind you about tasks you need to complete, and updates on websites.
- Make themselves available by telephone for support discussion and provide you with industry updates by email where applicable.
- Keep in touch with you during your studies.

## Flexible Learning

Studying to become a competent worker is an interesting and exciting thing to do. You will learn about current issues in this area. You will establish relationships with other students, fellow workers, and clients. You will learn about your own ideas, attitudes, and values. You will also have fun. (Most of the time!)

At other times, studying can seem overwhelming and impossibly demanding, particularly when you have an assignment to do and you aren't sure how to tackle it, your family and friends want you to spend time with them, or a movie you want to see is on television.

Sometimes being a student can be hard.

Here are some ideas to help you through the hard times. To study effectively, you need space, resources, and time.

### Space

Try to set up a place at home or at work where:

1. You can keep your study materials,
2. you can be reasonably quiet and free from interruptions, and
3. you can be reasonably comfortable, with good lighting, seating, and a flat surface for writing.

If it is impossible for you to set up a study space, perhaps you could use your local library. You will not be able to store your study materials there, but you will have quiet, a desk and chair, and easy access to the other facilities.



## Study Resources

The most basic resources you will need are:

1. A chair
2. A desk or table
3. A computer with Internet access
4. A reading lamp or good light
5. A folder or file to keep your notes and study materials together
6. Materials to record information (pen and paper or notebooks, or a computer and printer)
7. Reference materials, including a dictionary

Do not forget that other people can be valuable study resources. Your fellow workers, work supervisor, other students, your facilitator, your local librarian, and workers in this area can also help you.

## Time

It is important to plan your study time. Work out a time that suits you and plan around it. Most people find that studying, in short, concentrated blocks of time (an hour or two) at regular intervals (daily, every second day, once a week) is more effective than trying to cram a lot of learning into a whole day. You need time to 'digest' the information in one section before you move on to the next, and everyone needs regular breaks from study to avoid overload. Be realistic in allocating time for study. Look at what is required for the unit and look at your other commitments.

Make up a study timetable and stick to it. Build in 'deadlines' and set yourself goals for completing study tasks. Allow time for reading and completing activities. Remember that it is the quality of the time you spend studying rather than the quantity that is important.

## Study Strategies

Different people have different learning 'styles'. Some people learn best by listening or repeating things out loud. Some learn best by 'doing', some by reading and making notes. Assess your own learning style and try to identify any barriers to learning which might affect you. Are you easily distracted? Are you afraid you will fail? Are you taking study too seriously? Not seriously enough? Do you have supportive friends and family? Here are some ideas for effective study strategies:

1. **Make notes.** This often helps you to remember new or unfamiliar information. Do not worry about spelling or neatness, as long as you can read your own notes. Keep your notes with the rest of your study materials and add to them as you go. Use pictures and diagrams if this helps.
2. **Underline keywords** when you are reading the materials in this Learner Guide. (Do not underline things in other people's books.) This also helps you to remember important points.
3. **Talk to other people** (fellow workers, fellow students, friends, family, or your facilitator) about what you are learning. As well as help you to clarify and understand new ideas, talking also gives you a chance to find out extra information and to get fresh ideas and different points of view.



## Using this Learner Guide

A Learner Guide is just that, a guide to help you learn. A Learner Guide is not a textbook. Your Learner Guide will:

1. Describe the skills you need to demonstrate to achieve competency for this unit.
2. Provide information and knowledge to help you develop your skills.
3. Provide you with structured learning activities to help you absorb knowledge and information and practice your skills.
4. Direct you to other sources of additional knowledge and information about topics for this unit.

## How to Get the Most Out of Your Learner Guide

Some sections are quite long and cover complex ideas and information. If you come across anything you do not understand:

1. Talk to your facilitator.
2. Research the area using the books and materials listed under Resources.
3. Discuss the issue with other people (your workplace supervisor, fellow workers, fellow students).
4. Try to relate the information presented in this Learner Guide to your own experience and to what you already know.
5. Ask yourself questions as you go. For example, 'Have I seen this happening anywhere?' 'Could this apply to me?' 'What if...' This will help you to 'make sense' of new material, and to build on your existing knowledge.
6. Talk to people about your study. Talking is a great way to reinforce what you are learning.
7. Make notes.
8. Work through the activities. Even if you are tempted to skip some activities, do them anyway. They are there for a reason, and even if you already have the knowledge or skills relating to a particular activity, doing them will help to reinforce what you already know. If you do not understand an activity, think carefully about the way the questions or instructions are phrased. Read the section again to see if you can make sense of it. If you are still confused, contact your facilitator or discuss the activity with other students, fellow workers or with your workplace supervisor.

## **Additional Research, Reading, and Note-Taking**

If you are using the additional references and resources suggested in the Learner Guide to take your knowledge a step further, there are a few simple things to keep in mind to make this kind of research easier.

Always make a note of the author's name, the title of the book or article, the edition, when it was published, where it was published, and the name of the publisher. This includes online articles. If you are taking notes about specific ideas or information, you will need to put the page number as well. This is called the reference information. You will need this for some assessment tasks, and it will help you to find the book again if you need to.

Keep your notes short and to the point. Relate your notes to the material in your Learner Guide. Put things into your own words. This will give you a better understanding of the material.

Start off with a question you want answered when you are exploring additional resource materials. This will structure your reading and save you time.

## Introduction



Play is vital in children's learning and holistic development. Through play, children will be able to discover, create, improvise, and imagine, and achieve a sense of independence and confidence as they make for themselves various play decisions. In addition to that, play supports children's ability to communicate and interact through social groups with their peers and interactions with adults. Children's interactions with adults allow them to ask questions and think critically.

Children must be provided with opportunities for play and learning. This includes providing children with appropriate and safe environments for play and implementing ways to further children's learning during play through routines and spontaneous learning experiences.

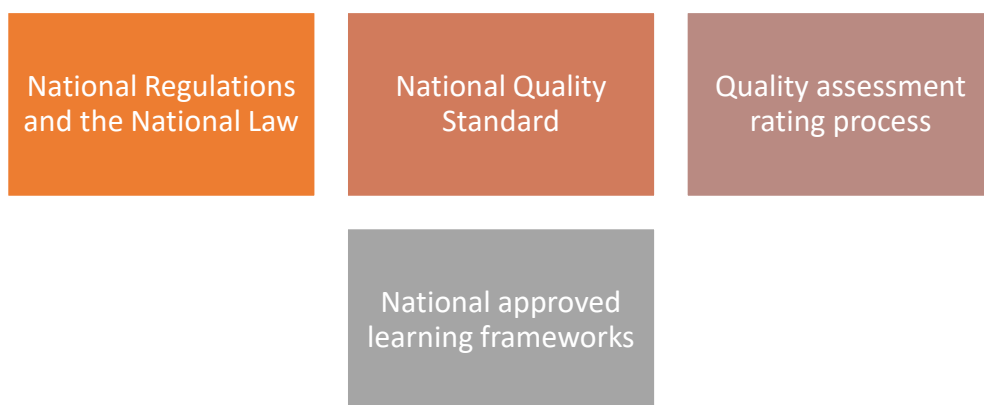
As an early childhood educator, it is your role to create the children's play environments and provide ways to support children's agency. In addition to that, you need to reflect on children's learning experiences and your own pedagogical practices as an early childhood educator.

In this learner guide, you will learn how to provide experiences to support children's play and learning, including how to:

- Create environments for play
- Support children's agency through play and learning
- Review and evaluate play opportunities

### **National Quality Framework (NQF)**

The aim of the National Quality Framework is to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in childhood care and education services through:



It also establishes a regulatory authority in each state/territory responsible for the approval, monitoring, and quality assessment of services and a national body, the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), which guides the implementation of the NQF. Requirements such as educator qualifications, educator-to-child ratios, and other key staffing arrangements were phased between 2012 and 2020.

### **National Legislative Framework**

The National Legislative Framework is established through an applied laws system and consists of:

- The Education and Care Services National Law (known as the 'National Law')
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations

Together, they create a national approach to the regulation and quality assessment of education and care services.

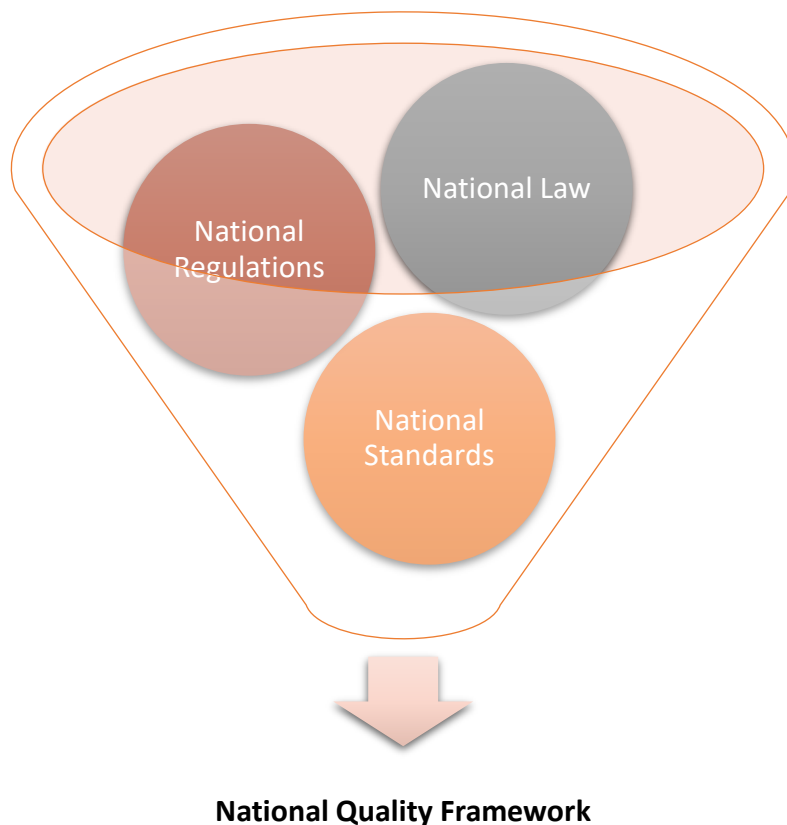
The National Law provides the objectives and guiding principles of the National Quality Framework. These shape the provisions outlined in the NQF.



### Further Reading

For further information on the objectives and guiding principles of the National Quality Framework, read the Introduction (pages 9 to 11) of the Guide to the NQF linked below.

[Guide to the National Quality Framework](#)



The NQF operates under an applied law system where there is a National Law, and each state/territory (except Western Australia) has Applicable Acts. Essentially, the same law (Education and Care Services National Law Act) is applied in each state/territory with some provisions to satisfy the different needs of each state/territory.

The legislation followed in each state/territory can be found in the table below.

State/Territory	Legislation	Application Act
Victoria	<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</a>	
New South Wales		<a href="#">Children (Education and Care Services National Law Application) Act 2010</a>
Australian Capital Territory		<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (Act) Act 2011</a>
Northern Territory		<a href="#">Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011</a>
South Australia		<a href="#">Education and Early Childhood Services (Regulation and Standards) Act 2011</a>
Tasmania		<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (Application) Act 2011</a>
Queensland	<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012</a>	<a href="#">Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011</a>
Western Australia		

Access and review the applicable law in your state/territory by clicking the link provided above.



## The National Quality Standard

The National Quality Standard, known as the NQS, set a national standard (benchmark) for early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services in Australia. The NQS applies to most long day care, family day care, outside school hours' care and preschools/kindergartens in Australia and is based on seven quality areas, namely:

QA1	• Educational program and practice
QA2	• Children's health and safety
QA3	• Physical environment
QA4	• Staffing arrangements
QA5	• Relationships with children
QA6	• Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
QA7	• Governance and leadership

In providing children with experiences to support play and learning, four of the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard (NQS) need to be considered. Under each quality area are relevant standards and elements that state and describe the target outcomes for quality education and care. The four quality areas are discussed below.

### Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

The objective of this Quality Area is to ensure that educational programs and practices are stimulating and engaging to children and enhances their learning and development. The development of life skills should be nurtured by programs in early childhood education and care services. It should complement children's experiences, opportunities, and relationships in the community, in school, and at home.

Quality Area 1 outlines three standards for educational program and practice. These standards and their elements are presented in the table below.

<b>Standard 1.1</b>	<b>Program</b>	<b>The educational program enhances each child's learning and development.</b>
Element 1.1.1	Approved learning framework	Curriculum decision making contributes to each child's learning and development outcomes in relation to their identity, connection with community, wellbeing, confidence as learners and effectiveness as communicators.
Element 1.1.2	Child-centred	Each child's current knowledge, strengths, ideas, culture, abilities, and interests are the foundation of the program.
Element 1.1.3	Program learning opportunities	All aspects of the program, including routines, are organised in ways that maximise opportunities for each child's learning.
<b>Standard 1.2</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Educators facilitate and extend each child's learning and development.</b>
Element 1.2.1	Intentional teaching	Educators are deliberate, purposeful, and thoughtful in their decisions and actions.
Element 1.2.2	Responsive teaching and scaffolding	Educators respond to children's ideas and play and extend children's learning through open-ended questions, interactions and feedback.
Element 1.2.3	Child-directed learning	Each child's agency is promoted, enabling them to make choices and decisions that influence events and their world.

Standard 1.3	Assessment and planning	Educators and co-ordinators take a planned and reflective approach to implementing the program for each child.
Element 1.3.1	Assessment and planning cycle	Each child's learning and development is assessed or evaluated as part of an ongoing cycle of observation, analysing learning, documentation, planning, implementation and reflection.
Element 1.3.2	Critical reflection	Critical reflection on children's learning and development, both as individuals and in groups, drives program planning and implementation.
Element 1.3.3	Information for families	Families are informed about the program and their child's progress.

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## Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety

The objective of this Quality Area is to safeguard and promote children's health and safety, including minimising risks and protecting children from harm, injury, and infection. A child's physical and psychological wellbeing should be well taken care of in early childhood education and care services. A child's growing competence, independence, and confidence should be supported.

The standards outlined by Quality Area 2 and their elements are presented in the table below:

Standard 2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
Element 2.1.1	Wellbeing and comfort	Each child's wellbeing and comfort is provided for, including appropriate opportunities to meet each child's need for sleep, rest and relaxation.
Element 2.1.2	Health practices and procedures	Effective illness and injury management and hygiene practices are promoted and implemented.

Standard 2.1	Health	Each child's health and physical activity is supported and promoted.
Element 2.1.3	Healthy lifestyle	Healthy eating and physical activity are promoted and appropriate for each child.
Standard 2.2	Safety	Each child is protected
Element 2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard
Element 2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised, and implemented.
Element 2.2.3	Child protection	Management, educators, and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities to identify and respond to every child at risk of abuse or neglect

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### Quality Area 3: Physical environment

The objective of this Quality Area is to ensure that the physical environment is safe, suitable and promotes the learning and development of children through a wide array of rich and diverse experiences. The environment in which you will provide early childhood education and care should be designed, equipped, and organised in a way that the level of engagement and positive experience of children is maximised. It should also promote inclusive relationships.

This Quality Area outlines two standards for the physical environment of children. The standards and their elements are presented in the table below.

<b>Standard 3.1</b>	<b>Design</b>	<b>The design of the facilities is appropriate for the operation of a service.</b>
Element 3.1.1	Fit for purpose	Outdoor and indoor spaces, buildings, fixtures, and fittings are suitable for their purpose, including supporting the access of every child.
Element 3.1.2	Upkeep	Premises, furniture, and equipment are safe, clean, and well maintained.
<b>Standard 3.2</b>	<b>Use</b>	<b>The service environment is inclusive, promotes competence and supports exploration and play-based learning</b>
Element 3.2.1	Inclusive environment	Outdoor and indoor spaces are organised and adapted to support every child's participation and to engage every child in quality experiences both built and natural.
Element 3.2.2	Resources support play-based learning	Resources, materials, and equipment allow for multiple uses, are sufficient in number, and enable every child to engage in play-based learning.
Element 3.2.3	Environmentally responsible	The service cares for the environment and supports children to become environmentally responsible.

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## **Quality Area 5: Relationships with children**

The objective of this Quality Area is to promote responsive and respectful relationships with children that promote their sense of security and belonging. This is to ensure that children feel free to explore their environment and engage in play and learning.

This Quality Area outlines two standards for relationships with children. The standards and their elements are presented in the table below.

<b>Standard 5.1</b>	<b>Relationships between educators and children</b>	<b>Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.</b>
Element 5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident, and included.
Element 5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained.
<b>Standard 5.2</b>	<b>Relationships between children</b>	<b>Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships</b>
Element 5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from, and help each other.
Element 5.2.2	Self-regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts.

*Sourced from [National Quality Framework](#), used under [CC BY 4.0](#).  
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As previously mentioned, the National Quality Standard is linked to the National Learning Frameworks that recognises that children learn from birth. The National approved learning framework outline practices that support and promote children's learning. All services must follow an approved learning framework, such as:

#### EYLF

- **Belonging, Being and Becoming:** The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (Early Years Learning Framework), which is applicable for young children from birth to five years of age.

#### FSAC

- **My Time, Our Place:** Framework for School Age Care in Australia, which is applicable for school age children



### Further Reading

Click the link below to access and read the approved learning frameworks mentioned above.

[Belonging Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#)

[My Time, Our Place: Framework for School Age Care in Australia](#)

### Play-Based Pedagogy

The EYLF defines pedagogy as an 'early childhood educator's professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.' Using that definition of pedagogy, you can define play-based pedagogy as a teaching approach, practice, or method that emphasises play as the primary motivation for children's learning and holistic development. It is based on the philosophy that, as children are naturally inclined and motivated to explore, experiment, and discover, play enables them to learn about themselves, other people, and things around them.

Features of a play-based pedagogy include:

#### Child-initiated learning

- Child-initiated learning means that children are provided with opportunities to decide what to play, how to play them and with whom to play .

#### Teacher-supported learning

- Teacher-supported learning means that the teacher or educator supplements children's learning through play by conversing with children and asking them open-ended questions to arouse their curiosity and interest.

*Based on [Play-based learning can set your child up for success at school and beyond](#),  
used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#). [The Conversation](#)*

Other features of a play-based approach include the following:

- Encourages language skills
- Supports pre-literacy skills
- Develops social and emotional skills
- Fosters creativity and imagination

The role of play-based pedagogy includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Stimulate a child's drive for exploration and discovery
- Enable a child to engage in flexible and higher-level thinking processes (e.g. problem-solving, analysing, evaluating)
- Support positive attitudes to learning (e.g. imagination, curiosity, enthusiasm, persistence)
- Develop children's social skills such as cooperation, sharing and responding to ideas, negotiating, and resolving conflicts.
- Use children's motivation and interest to explore concepts and ideas

A play-based pedagogy is important as this provides children with an opportunity to decide for themselves, a significant trait to develop as children grow. By providing children with learning opportunities to make decisions, they improve their self-image, self-confidence, and how they interact with people and their environment.





## Further Reading

The link below shows a video by ACECQA about how play inspires children's love of learning.

[How does play inspire children's love of learning?](#)

You can also browse through ACEQAs YouTube channel to watch more videos about children's play and learning. Click the link below to access their videos.

[ACECQA Youtube Channel Videos](#)

## Play-Based Learning and Free Play

The two terminologies, *play-based learning* and *free play* are words you often encounter as an early childhood educator. These two may look similar at a glance, but they have differences that set them apart from each other.

The table below shows a list of their differences.

Play-based learning	Free play
The appropriate environment is set according to the expected learning outcomes.	The appropriate environment is set for children to access and perform different play activities they choose for their own enjoyment.
Adults (i.e. educators) direct and actively engage in the play.	Children direct the play. Adults may engage under the direction of the child.
Children are expected to transfer new knowledge to broader teaching and learning contexts gradually.	No outcomes are expected of children from playing. In other words, children are allowed to play for the sake of playing and having fun.
Because play-based learning involves structured activities such as solving a puzzle, children are able to develop basic problem-solving skills.	Because children have the freedom to explore their environment or activities in their own way, they are able to develop their creativity and imagination.
Because play-based learning involve activities with a specific purpose and direction, children learn to work together to achieve a single goal or output.	Because children have the freedom to explore their environment or activities in their own way, they learn how to interact with other children.

No matter the differences, play-based learning and free play are both vital in children's growth and development and must be incorporated into the service's activities.

## History of Play and Childhood

It is important to know the history of play and childhood in Australia as this helps you understand how developments concerning children's play and learning came to be. The following discussion about the history of play and childhood in Australia is based on the article *Celebrating 100 Years of Play-by-Play Australia*, which is the peak national advocacy organisation for play and the Australian branch of the International Play Association (IPA).

During the early 1900s, in a poverty-stricken Melbourne, groups of children played wherever they could and were considered a nuisance, disturbing the members of the public in suburban parks, gardens, and streets. The Guild of Play (formed in 1914), together with organisations and companies, responded to this issue by establishing playgrounds all over Melbourne from 1914 through 1923.

Later on, children were provided with supervision in playgrounds and provided with activities considered to be educational through 'Play Leaders'. Play leaders were people who served as guides, performing supervisory roles to assist children playing in playgrounds. They were funded by local councils and trained by the Playgrounds and Recreation Association of Victoria (PRAV).

As playgrounds became more prominent, playground-related child injuries occurred more frequently. In 1980, Australia took action to address this by adapting provisions from the British Standards (which later on became part of the Australian Standards, which are still being used at present), aiming to provide safer playgrounds and address child injuries. Additionally, the focus was given to the training of supervisors.

Through time, key developments, which reflected changes in politics, funding, and general social issues, were made concerning children's play, such as:

- Supervised play in public playgrounds
- Developments in childcare and preschool education
- Design of playgrounds to provide participation in play for all children
- Introduction of Playground Standards in response to the injury prevention lobby
- Focus on reconnecting children with the natural environment.



### Further Reading

Click the link below to access and read Play Australia's article entitled *Celebrating 100 Years of Play*.

[Celebrating 100 Years of Play](#)

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

In December 1990, Australia ratified the main international human rights treaty on children's right, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (also known as CRC or UNCRC). It incorporates general human rights and children's special rights and is based on the four guiding principles, namely:

- Respect for the best interest of the child as a primary consideration
- The right to survival and development
- The right of all children to express their views freely on all matters affecting them
- The right of all children to enjoy all the rights of the CRC without discrimination of any kind

According to the CRC, children have the right to:

Be treated fairly no matter what

Have a say about decisions affecting them

Live and grow up healthy

Have people do what is best for them

Know who they are and where they come from

Believe what they want

Privacy

Find out information and express themselves

Be safe no matter where they are

Be cared for and have a home

Education, play and cultural activities

Help and protection if they need it

*Sourced from [About Children's Rights](#), used under CC BY 4.0.  
© Australian Human Rights Commission 2019.*

As discussed earlier, one of the four guiding principles of the CRC is 'The Rights of all children to enjoy all the rights of the CRC without discrimination of any kind.' Article 31 of the CRC supports this principle further, presenting the following:

- *The right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts*

This means that educators should give ample time for the children's play times and rest times. Children should also have the freedom to participate in any indoor or outdoor activity that they are interested in.

- *The right of the child to be provided with and participate fully in appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.*

This means that children should not experience discrimination, and should be provided with equal opportunities to participate in any indoor or outdoor activity that they are interested in.

As an early childhood educator tasked with providing experiences to support children's play and learning, you must keep in mind children's rights mentioned above in your professional practice.



### Further Reading

Click the link below to read the full text of the CRC, including Article 31.

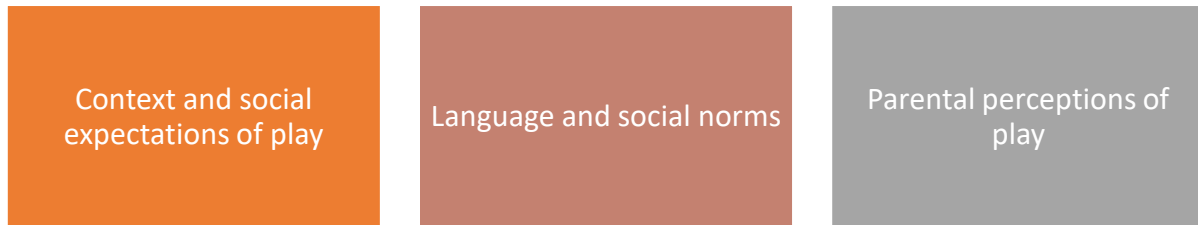
[Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

### The Nature of Play Across Cultures

Children in the service may have different cultural backgrounds that affect their beliefs, attitudes, and practices, including the way they play. Especially for immigrant children, adjusting to the service's culture and context, including the practices surrounding play, may be challenging. Li (2017) explains that, as play is sociocultural in nature, 'children in different cultures engage in play differently due to differences in language, context and social norms.' While Australia considers play as the means for children's learning, other cultures may see play as a pastime and separate from learning.

*Based on [Immigrant children's play can clash with mainstream cultures](#),  
used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#). *The Conversation**

Therefore, you need to understand the nature of play across cultures to help you in providing ways to provide learning opportunities that are inclusive and culturally appropriate. In doing so, you need to look further into the following:



Differences in context and social expectations of play encompass the concept of children-led play versus adult-supervised spaces. According to Li (2017), Sudanese and Vietnamese children are accustomed to free play without adult supervision. However, upon immigrating to the United States, parents had to keep a close eye on their children, especially where and with whom children are playing due to unsafe environments.

Other things examined when considering differences in context and social expectations of play are the use of toys and screen time. According to Li (2017), North American children's upbringing is filled with both electronic and non-electronic toys and games. In addition to that, children brought up in the United States and Canada are increasingly getting more screen time. This may become a challenge when these children adjust to Australian service providers' learning environments.

Differences in language are evident in children imitating the language they hear or observe from adults in the same culture. Meanwhile, differences in social norms can be seen when children display unique behaviours or practices, such as, for example, bowing (as in Asian cultures) to show respect or head bobbling (as in Indian cultures) to express approval or disapproval. Remember to take note of this since this 'may be an apparent barrier for immigrant and mainstream children's play activities' (Li, 2017).

Lastly, varying parental perceptions may affect or limit the children's engagement in play. Some examples of parental perceptions include the following:

- Too much play is a waste of time for learning.
- Children's play time must be limited to maximise academic learning time.
- Repeated learning sessions should be established at home after day school.

*Based on [Immigrant children's play can clash with mainstream cultures](#),  
used under [CC BY-ND 4.0](#). [The Conversation](#)*

With all that said, it is your role as an early childhood educator to keep these in mind as these may give you an idea of children's behaviours and tendencies during play.

## How Children Learn

Through everyday play and exploration in a safe and stimulating environment, including regular interactions, children will be able to learn essential skills such as communicating, thinking, and socialising with people. Examples of ways in which children learn include the following:

- Observing things
- Listening to sounds
- Exploring and experimenting (e.g. shaking things, touching sand or dirt, etc.)
- Asking questions
- Doing things that stimulate all of their senses.

Children can also learn by being involved in their learning. Examples include:

- Choosing books to read
- Picking out vegetables for dinner
- Choosing toys to play with

*Sourced from [Learning in the baby to preschool years](#). Raising Children Network (Australia)*

## Different Learning Styles

Children have different approaches when learning things. Some children lean towards looking at pictures and art, while others prefer to talk and listen and move around. It is vital that you take note and support individual child's learning style since they learn and perform better when these are recognised and applied.

There are three general types of learning styles, which are:

- **Visual learning**

Children who are visual learners learn best by observing and looking into the things around them. They prefer looking at photographs, landscapes, videos, and diagrams and usually are interested in arts and crafts.

- **Auditory learning**

Children who are auditory learners learn best through listening. This means that they remember and process things that they hear more than what appeals to the other senses. It also means that information is stored better in their brain based on what sounds they hear and that they tend to follow spoken instructions rather than reading those instructions (or reading instructions aloud rather than seeing them on paper). This can be seen in children who love to talk and listen.

- **Kinaesthetic (or tactile) learning**

Children who are kinaesthetic learners learn best by touching, feeling, and moving things around. Usually, they enjoy hands-on activities such as block-buildings and physical activities such as dance and sports.

### **Quality Play Opportunity**

As discussed, play is a vital component in children's learning as it enables them to learn about themselves, other people, and things around them. Thus, as an early childhood educator, you need to provide children with quality play opportunities. A quality play opportunity can be defined as play that:

- Promotes physical activity
- Allows for the expression of personality and uniqueness
- Enhances dispositions such as curiosity and creativity
- Enables children to make connections between prior experiences and new learning
- Assists children to develop relationships (i.e. social interaction )and concepts
- Stimulates a sense of wellbeing

*Based on [The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#), used under CC BY 4.0.*

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### **Further Reading**

Click the link below to read further details on children's learning styles and the strategies you can use to accommodate each learning style.

[Implementing Different Learning Styles When Teaching Children](#)

## I. Create Environments for Play



Providing experiences to support children's play and learning involves, first and foremost, creating environments for play. This requires careful consideration of the different types of play to ensure that children are provided with various play experiences for their holistic learning. In other words, areas, resources, and materials for play must be selected and set up to accommodate, for example, dramatic play, pretend play, or physical activity, as well as activities that are indoor, outdoor, group or individual.

Apart from selecting and setting up play areas, resources, and materials, your role as an early childhood educator is to collaborate with your fellow educators to enhance children's play experiences, including brainstorming and discussion of information from observation and reflection. In addition to that, you need to actively supervise children to ensure that children are safe while engaging within their play environments.



This chapter will thoroughly discuss creating environments for play, including:

- Selecting and setting up areas, resources and materials that suit different kinds of play according to service curriculum and safety procedures
- Incorporating the use of real, natural and recycled materials in play environments
- Using teamwork and collaboration with other educators as a way of enhancing play experiences
- Identifying and using information from observations and reflection to inform play opportunities
- Supporting unhurried opportunities for play by organising and allowing sufficient time

### **Interrelationship Between Play and Safety**

As mentioned, play is vital in children's learning and holistic development. However, note that there are risks associated with play. While it is your role to allow children to have a degree of freedom to explore their play environments, you must ensure that this play environment is safe. In other words, there should be a balance between both aspects; play that is too safe can result in over-restrictive limitations, preventing children from experiencing the benefits of exploration and experimentation, while play that is too risky can result in injuries and accidents.

Examples of risks associated with play include, but are not limited to:

- Falling due to climbing equipment such as slides, monkey bars, etc.
- Choking when babies accidentally swallow small toys
- Poisoning due to ingestion of toxic chemicals from toys
- Risk of children getting lost due to children's unfamiliarity of the service premises
- Wounds and cuts due to exposure to sharp toys or equipment or falling due to rough play, such as *run and chase*.

When you have identified the risks and any hazards that may lead to dangerous situations, as the ones stated above, you need to implement measures to remove or minimise the likelihood and impact of harm. Below are ways you can minimise risks for children and others:

- Observe proper sanitation in the service always. This means following standards for cleaning surfaces, linen, clothing, toys, cots, and the like to minimise the spread of diseases among children and educators.
- Ensure that toys and equipment are in good condition. For example:
  - Removing broken toys with sharp edges
  - Fixing broken/poorly maintained equipment, especially those with splinters or protruding parts, before letting children use them
  - Avoiding the use of small toys (for babies) and those made of toxic materials to avoid or reduce the risk of choking hazards and poisoning, respectively
  - Ensuring surfaces of play areas are flat, provide grip and free of scattered objects to eliminate or reduce the risk of trip hazards
- Properly store dangerous materials, such as hazardous cleaning chemicals and kitchenware, to keep them out of children's reach.

At all times, you must provide active supervision to ensure children's safety to prevent risks such as falling from heights and those mentioned above. Active supervision requires you to monitor and observe children's actions at all times, following proper educator-child ratios and positioning and engaging with children regarding any rules to minimise risks. Remember that as an early childhood educator worker, you are acting in place of the parent. It is important to exercise the standard of care that parents place in their home as they are placing an enormous amount of trust in their child.



### Further Reading

Read the article below to read more about active supervision.

[Get your supervision active with these 6 tips](#)

Note that your service's policies and procedures contain all the specifications regarding standards, policies, and procedures relevant to children's health and safety, such as:

- The corresponding Australian Standards complied with, specifically those standards relating to:
  - General child safety
  - Playground safety
  - Safety of toys
  - Cots
- Work health and safety policy, including educators' and relevant staff members' role to:
  - Regularly check and ensure the safety of play areas and equipment
  - Report incidences of injuries or illnesses
  - Conduct risk management
  - Apply emergency procedures
- Health, hygiene and infection control policy



### Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Sparkling Stars is the simulated early years learning centre environment referenced in our learning resources.

Their policies and procedures, including those relevant to children's health and safety, are published on their site. You can access them through the link below.

[Workplace Health and Safety Policy](#)

[Health, Hygiene and Infection Control Policy](#)

*(username: newusername password: new password)*

## 1.1 Select and Set Up Areas, Resources and Materials That Suit Different Kinds of Play According to Service Curriculum and Safety Procedures

Children have different preferences with regards to play activities. Some children may prefer individual arts and crafts activities, while others may prefer to socialise and play on the playground or engage in pretend play. Thus, you must select and set up areas to accommodate the service's various play activities. Remember that in doing so, you need to prioritise children's health and safety. Children's play may be categorised into the following types:



- **Individual play**

It is play done by the child alone (i.e. solitary play).

- **Group play**

It is play done by several children.

- **Indoor play**

It is play done inside the service's building.

- **Outdoor play**

It is play done usually in natural environments.

- **Play supporting fundamental skill**

It is play that supports children's coordination and movements, including:

- Rolling
- Stopping
- Bending
- Twisting
- Landing
- Stretching
- Climbing
- Static and Dynamic Balancing
- Turning



## Setting Up Areas for Different Kinds of Play

There are many important things to think about when setting up areas for children's play, such as:

- How children use play materials
- The children's stage of social play
- The types of play experiences to choose from
- The interests of the children

It is also important to consider any safety issues. Things you must look out for in selecting resources and materials include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Small parts that may be chewed, broken or inhaled by young children, in particular by those under three years of age
- Sharp edges or points and hinges, springs, and small gaps that may cut or catch small fingers
- Long strings, ropes, or ribbons (which could strangle a young child)

Below is the process for providing areas for different kinds of play:

- Select resources and materials that:
  - Reflect the interest and developmental characteristics of the children
  - Are available within the service or from elsewhere
- Select a suitable place within the environment to set it up.
- Arrange resources and materials in a way that is interesting and inviting.
- Identify how many children will be involved at any one time.
- Have additional resources and materials on hand to extend the children's play and respond to their interests.

Keep in mind that well-resourced, well-planned, and predictable indoor and outdoor spaces help children to see the opportunities that are available for play.

On the following page is a table that contains the types of play and the descriptions of the environments, resources, and materials corresponding to each type of play. You can use the table as a reference in selecting and setting up areas, resources, and materials for children's play in your service. And while the table on the following page may adequately describe the environment, resources, and materials for each type of play, remember to refer to your service's policies and procedures as these contain the complete specifications for the environment, resources, and materials for each type of play.

Type of Play	Environment	Resources	Materials
Indoor play	<p>The environment must be home-like, which means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aesthetically pleasing (e.g. having a colourful environment to stimulate children's senses, displaying children's toys, and arts and crafts materials, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Comfortable (e.g. child-sized furniture)</li> <li>▪ Secure</li> <li>▪ Things are organised properly</li> </ul>	<p>Resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chairs</li> <li>▪ Tables</li> <li>▪ Carpets</li> <li>▪ Shelves for displaying and storing toys and books</li> <li>▪ Blankets</li> </ul>	<p>Materials include (but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pencils, pens, papers, scissors, paint</li> <li>▪ Books and children's magazines</li> <li>▪ Construction materials, such as blocks, play dough, etc.</li> <li>▪ Puzzles</li> </ul>
Outdoor play	<p>The environment features natural elements such as plants, trees, sand, mud, and rocks and provides an opportunity for children to spend time in the sun. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parks</li> <li>▪ Beaches</li> <li>▪ Playgrounds</li> </ul>	<p>Resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sun protection clothing (e.g. long-sleeve shirts, pants, closed shoes, prescribed hats for eye protection, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Sunscreen</li> <li>▪ Drinking water</li> <li>▪ Natural and artificial shade</li> </ul>	<p>Materials include (but is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ropes for skipping</li> <li>▪ Cones for obstacle courses</li> <li>▪ Playground equipment such as swings, slides, etc.</li> <li>▪ Balls for catch games</li> <li>▪ Bicycles</li> </ul>

Type of Play	Environment	Resources	Materials
Individual Play	<p>The environment must be set up to accommodate play activities performed by a single child. Thus, the environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contains different toys and objects to stimulate children's creativity and imagination</li> <li>▪ Must provide adequate space for children to develop a sense of independence and initiative</li> </ul>	<p>Resources for individual play may be quite similar to indoor play and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Child-sized tables and chairs</li> <li>▪ Couches, cushion, etc.</li> <li>▪ Shelves for toys and books</li> <li>▪ Music (especially for quiet play areas)</li> </ul>	<p>Materials may be quite similar to indoor play and include (but are not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pencils, pens, papers, scissors, paint</li> <li>▪ Books and children's magazines</li> <li>▪ Construction materials, such as blocks, play dough, etc.</li> <li>▪ Puzzles</li> </ul>
Group play	<p>The most important consideration for group play is adequate space. Whether group play is held indoors or outdoors, space must be enough for children to move around freely and must be suited to accommodate the game or activity they are going to do.</p>	<p>For group play held outdoors, resources may be quite similar to outdoor play and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sun protection clothing and sunscreen</li> <li>▪ Drinking water</li> <li>▪ Natural resources (e.g. sand, leaves, trees, mud)</li> <li>▪ Music (for dance activities)</li> </ul>	<p>Materials include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Variety of clothes for dress-up games</li> <li>▪ Variety of tools (e.g. toy kitchenware) for pretend games</li> <li>▪ Toys for playing in the sand</li> <li>▪ Playground equipment (e.g. slides and swings)</li> </ul>



Type of Play	Environment	Resources	Materials
Group play		<p><i>(continued from the previous page)</i></p> <p>For group play held indoors, resources may be quite similar to indoor play discussed earlier and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Child-sized furniture</li> <li>▪ Carpets and cushions to sit-on</li> <li>▪ Shelves for books and toys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Books for imaginative discussions</li> <li>▪ Art and craft materials (e.g. pencils, paper, paint, etc.) for group art activities</li> </ul>
Play supporting fundamental skills	The environment must be spacious enough to accommodate basic movement such as crawling, walking, rolling, and others.	<p>Resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Blankets or carpets to sit and crawl on</li> <li>▪ Natural environments where children can spend time walking and exploring</li> </ul>	<p>Materials include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Toys, such as blocks and rails for construction and manipulative plays</li> <li>▪ Crafts such as origami, which improves creativity and exercises hand muscles</li> <li>▪ Playground equipment (e.g. slides and swings)</li> <li>▪ Push-and-pull toys (e.g. kites)</li> </ul>



## Further Reading

You can also read the article below from Raising Children Network to know more about materials for different types of play activities for babies, toddlers, and pre-schoolers. Click the links below:

[Babies: play & learning](#)

[Toddlers: play & learning](#)

[Pre-schoolers: play & learning](#)

Keep in mind that you must always make sure that children's play areas are:

- Safe
- Non-threatening
- Stimulating
- Challenging
- Culturally appropriate
- Set to promote a sense of creativity
- Set to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion

The paragraphs below provide a discussion on safe, non-threatening, stimulating, challenging, culturally appropriate play areas and play areas that promote a sense of belonging and inclusion.

## Safe Play Areas

Safe play areas refer to play areas wherein safety hazards are identified and removed, and measures to prevent or minimise risks are implemented. In creating a safe play area:

- Check out for any hazards related to toys and equipment, such as loose parts which may be swallowed, sharp plastics or metals, etc.
- Equip playgrounds with cushions to reduce the impact of falls.
- Ensure that shade is provided for children to rest under and protect themselves from extreme heat.

- Establish rules such as no pushing or shoving to reduce the likelihood of accidents.
- Make sure children wear the proper protective equipment, such as helmets and kneepads, when riding bicycles.
- Remove any hazards related to children's clothing. This includes loose strings, shoes not tied properly, necklaces and others that may be easily stuck or caught on equipment.

### **Non-Threatening Play Areas**

Non-threatening play areas refer to play areas that help the child achieve a sense of security. In creating a non-threatening play area:

- Decorate the play area with things that children are familiar with (i.e. things they usually see at home).
- Communicate positively with children to develop their sense of confidence when they express what they need.
- Ensure that the play area is set up to achieve a home-like feeling, such as good lighting, appropriate temperature, and relaxing music as they play.

### **Stimulating Play Areas**

Stimulating play areas refer to play areas that constantly arouse children's curiosity and initiative to explore and learn. In creating a stimulating play area:

- Provide children with a variety of books and images
- Use a variety of toys with different colours and patterns
- Incorporate musical instruments
- Incorporate toys that stimulate their imagination and creativity, such as:
  - Animal toys
  - Pencils, watercolour, paint and other arts and crafts supplies
  - Dolls
  - Playdough

## Challenging Play Areas

Challenging play areas refer to play areas that encourage children to achieve a goal. In infancy, this could be as simple as reaching for a toy that is just out of reach or simply pulling themselves up in a standing position. As children grow older, they continue to set challenges for themselves, such as running faster or climbing higher.

In creating challenging environments:

- Ensure that there is a number of safe and stable objects in the environment children can use to practise pulling themselves into standing positions.
- Provide balls and other toys with different shapes, sizes, and texture for children to reach for or crawl towards.
- Provide challenging activities such as shaped blocks (for younger children), jigsaw puzzles, origami, block and construction sets, etc.
- Conduct games such as *run and chase*, obstacle courses, etc.

## Culturally Appropriate Play Areas

Culturally appropriate play areas refer to play areas that reflect and incorporate cultural diversity. This allows children to be exposed to different cultural backgrounds, including practices and language. In creating culturally appropriate play areas:

- Decorate the play area according to different cultural celebrations and messages
- Display pictures or images of people coming from different cultural backgrounds
- Adapt common games to incorporate culture
- Incorporate music from different cultures
- Provide activities wherein children can dress up according to different cultures or learn a traditional dance
- Display different flags around the area (e.g. Aboriginal flag, Torres Strait Island flag, Australian flag, etc.)

### **Play Areas That Promote a Sense of Creativity**

Play areas that promote a sense of creativity are those that spark children's imagination. They allow children to express how they feel, which promotes mental health and develops children's ability to formulate new ideas that can be used for problem-solving. In creating play areas that promote a sense of creativity:

- Provide children with a variety of choices for arts and crafts (e.g. empty cardboard boxes, paint, digital art, etc.).
- Make time for children to engage in pretend play (e.g. pretending to be their favourite animal or dressing up as a doctor, businessman, etc.).
- Incorporate music and dance (e.g. singing songs and rhymes, playing with percussive materials, jumping and waving along with the music, etc.)

### **Play Areas That Promote a Sense of Belonging and Inclusion**

Simply, play areas that promote a sense of belonging and inclusion refer to play areas that motivate children to be themselves (i.e. develop their identity) and develop their relationships with peers. Additionally, these are areas where children feel safe to share ideas or experience without judgement. In creating such areas:

- Maintain an environment free from discrimination, bias, and bullying.
- Provide activities that promote collaboration and teamwork among children.
- Praise and motivate children using positive phrases when they show their work.

Note that, as mentioned, your service's policies and procedures contain all the specifications regarding standards, policies, and procedures relevant to children's physical play environments, including:

- All facilities and materials (e.g. natural environment, man-made facilities, etc.)
- Maintenance and upkeep policies and procedures

You must refer to these documents as these will help you in selecting and setting up the areas, resources, and materials for children's play.



## Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures relevant to the service facilities and environment through the link below:

[Facilities and Environment Policy and Procedure](#)

(username: newusername password: new password)



## Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Types of children's play include the following:
  - Individual play
  - Group play
  - Indoor play
  - Outdoor play
  - Play supporting fundamental movement skills
2. When selecting and setting up areas for children's play, you must consider the following:
  - How children use play materials
  - The children's stage of social play
  - The type of play experiences to choose from
  - The interests of the children
3. Keep in mind that you must always ensure that children's play areas are:
  - Safe
  - Non-threatening
  - Stimulating
  - Challenging
  - Culturally appropriate
  - Set to promote a sense of creativity
  - Set to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion

## 1.2 Incorporate the Use of Real, Natural and Recycled Materials in Play Environments

In the previous subchapter, you learnt about the materials for the different types of play. This subchapter will focus more on the use of real, natural, and recycled materials in play environments. As stated in *Outcome 2* of the EYLF, children must be socially responsible and show respect for the environment. Thus, it is important that real, natural, and recycled materials be incorporated into play environments.

### Real Materials

Simply, incorporating real materials in children's play means letting children handle 'real things', such as real plates, real utensils, so on and so forth. By doing this, children will be able to experience how things are in real life and develop skills such as maintaining focus, patience, and care. Additionally, they will gain awareness of real consequences when things break due to misuse or mishandling.

Below are some ways you can incorporate real materials in children's play:

- In creating art (i.e. colouring, painting), you may provide children with discarded architectural plans which they can colour or design.
- Take children on a trip to the garden and let them work with plants using shovels, pails, pots, etc.
- Let children use drinking containers made of glass every time they drink water.
- Allow children to use real musical instruments.

### Natural Materials

Natural materials refer to natural resources such as leaves, shells, seeds, rocks, and others that children can use when playing. Just with real materials, incorporating natural materials develop a sense of reality in children. Additionally, it expands children's knowledge and stimulates their imagination based on things they can see in the real world.



Below are some ways you can incorporate natural materials in children's play:

- Sort out rocks based on their sizes.
- Create leaf art using real leaves of different colours.
- Create necklaces out of shells.
- Paint images on smooth rocks.

## Recycled Materials



Recycled materials refer to waste materials such as paper, cardboard, or plastic, which may be used for other purposes to reduce waste. By incorporating recycled materials in children's play, children will be able to develop an understanding and respect for the environment. Additionally, it helps them in gaining an appreciation of the practice of recycling early in life.



Below are some ways you can incorporate recycled materials in children's play:

- Create collages out of discarded magazine cut-outs or old newspapers.
- Help children recreate their favourite buildings or cars using cartons or cereal boxes.
- Turn empty bottles into garden pots.



### Further Reading

Read more about incorporating real, natural, and recycled materials in children's play through the articles linked below.

[Why are Real Materials so important in the Montessori Classroom and at home?](#)

[Using natural materials to enhance children's learning](#)

[75 Recycled Art Projects for Kids](#)



### Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Incorporating real materials in children's play means letting children handle 'real things', such as real plates, real utensils, so on and so forth.
2. Natural materials refer to natural resources such as leaves, shells, seeds, rocks, and others that children can use when playing.
3. Recycled materials refer to waste materials such as paper, cardboard, or plastic, which may be used for other purposes to reduce waste.

### 1.3 Use Teamwork and Collaboration With Other Educators as a Way of Enhancing Play Experiences



In the previous subchapter, you learnt about how to incorporate real, natural, and recycled materials in children's play environments. You also learnt in Subchapter 1.1 how to select and set up areas, resources, and materials for different types of play. In doing the tasks mentioned, take note that these can only be effectively done through teamwork and collaboration with other educators.

You and other educators must work in the spirit of teamwork and collaboration to enhance children's play experiences. This means communicating with each other and sharing the knowledge, experiences, learnings, realisations, and strengths for growth and continuous improvement in the service and, most importantly, children's overall development and experience.

Raising Children Network suggests some ways families can work in teamwork and collaboration. While it is mainly for parents, you and other educators can use the ways here to enhance children's play experiences. These are the following:

- **Solve problems**

Problem-solving involves you and other educators identifying and defining the problem, setting a common goal, brainstorming solutions to achieve the goal, and evaluating which solution to try. When the chosen solution has been tested, you must review which aspects of the solution worked or did not work and re-evaluate whether the solution must be maintained, improved, or changed.

- **Manage Conflict**

Managing conflict involves respecting and valuing each other's different views, opinions, and contributions despite disagreements. In doing so, it is important for criticisms to be constructive. This means acknowledging the positives and citing areas for improvement. The steps for problem-solving discussed previously may also be applied in managing conflicts.

- **Talk and Listen**

Both talking and listening are primary ingredients of effective communication among educators. Talking and listening involve expressing what you think or feel and paying attention to what others have to say. In doing so, you must keep communication positive.

- **Back Each Other Up**

Backing each other up means supporting each other's endeavours, acknowledging each other's contributions (i.e. positive feedback), and looking out for each other in times of stress.

- **Accept Each Other's Differences**

Accepting each other's differences means valuing each other's differences, especially in times of conflict. In doing so, you must be flexible, tolerant, open-minded, and forgiving.

*Based on [Raising children as a team: why it's important](#). Raising Children Network (Australia)*



### Further Reading

Read the article from Raising Children Network (Australia) to know more about raising children as a team. Click the link below:

[Raising children as a team: why it's important](#)

## 1.4 Identify and Use Information From Observations and Reflection to Inform Play Opportunities

In the previous subchapter, you learnt about using teamwork and collaboration with other educators to enhance children's play opportunities. In this subchapter, you will be focusing on observations and reflection to inform play opportunities.

Both observation and reflection are effective ways to identify and gather information about children to come up with activities and strategies that are appropriate for children's individual and collective growth and development.

### Observations

Observation refers to the act of looking after and watching over children as they perform different activities and interact with others. In observing children, you need to pay close attention to the following:

- Name and age of the child
- Environmental setting. This includes:
  - Date of observation
  - Description of the exact location the child is playing
  - The play or activity done by the child
- How a child behaves while playing. For example:
  - Do they play alone, or do they play with other groups of children?
  - Do they leave toys scattered around after play, or do they make an effort to pick and place them on the proper containers?
  - Do they initiate the play, or do they follow what others say?

Observing how a child behaves during play allows you to identify their strengths and weaknesses, tendencies, interests, areas for improvement, and potential.

In doing so, it is imperative to be objective — not subjective— in your observations. This means recording only what is actually happening (i.e. what you see and hear), not including your personal opinions or beliefs to justify the information recorded.



## Further Reading

The article below from Aussie Childcare Network provides a discussion on observations in childcare. Read the article linked below to read about the methods of observations that you can apply when observing children:

[Observations in Childcare](#)

## Reflection

According to the EYLF, reflection is a practice that involves a close and constant examination of 'all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives.' It also states that apart from gathering information, reflection is done to 'gain insights that support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning.' In other words, educators use reflection as a means to make changes and improvements to current practices and children's learning environments (including children's play opportunities).

Additionally, according to the EYLF, educators incorporate reflective practices by asking themselves a set of overarching questions such as the following:

- What are my understandings of each child?
- What theories, philosophies and understandings shape and assist my work?
- Who is advantaged when I work in this way? Who is disadvantaged?
- What questions do I have about my work? What am I challenged by? What am I curious about? What am I confronted by?
- What aspects of my work are not helped by the theories and guidance that I usually draw on to make sense of what I do?
- Are there other theories or knowledge that could help me to understand better what I have observed or experienced? What are they? How might those theories and that knowledge affect my practice?

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Meaningful reflection involves the following processes:

- **Recalling important events in the service.** This means looking into prior observations of children, the learning experiences you provided for them, and your professional practice — including all that went right and wrong. This is best done in collaboration with other educators to determine which events are considered impactful and share best practices for meaningful reflection.
- **Analysing the information from events recalled.** This involves examining further children's learning experiences, and important events recalled. In addition to that, you incorporate your perspectives and other's (i.e. other educators, parents, children) views about the matter to come up with the best ways to extend learning and/or address issues or concerns. In the context of children's play and learning, analysis of information allows you to come up with ways to provide children with various play opportunities.
- **Implementing the course of action.** Simply, this involves putting into action everything discussed during the analysis phase, which includes extending learning experiences and modifying play activities and environments.
- **Evaluating the outcomes of the actions done.** This involves examining whether the course of action implemented (including extensions of learning and modification of certain play experiences) results in better outcomes in terms of children's learning experiences and overall professional practice. This is best done in collaboration with other educators and families to allow for various ideas and perspectives to be considered and decide whether certain practices or experiences are to be maintained, improved, or changed.

Characteristics of meaningful reflection include the following:

- **Self-aware** – This means educators regularly reflect on how they could improve children's play and learning experiences.
- **Applicable** – This means educators are able to apply realisations from reflection into future play and learning experiences
- **Shared** – This means educators share their reflections with one another (i.e. colleagues) to learn from each one's personal experiences and insights.



Generally, observation and reflection can be used in the planning of the service's curriculum or program. For example, through observation, you notice that a child rarely plays with other children during play. To achieve *Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators* of the EYLF, you can reflect on action items to address this outcome by, for example, deciding on and implementing group-based activities (e.g. one group pretending to be patients while the other is a group of medical practitioners). After some time of repeated experiences of group-based activities, you can assess whether the activities have encouraged the child to play and interact with others regularly. Your next step of continuing, improving, or changing the activities depends on whether the outcome has been achieved or not.



### Further Reading

Read the article from Aussie Childcare Network to know more about observation and reflective practices. Click the link below:

[Reflective Practices In Childcare](#)

## 1.5 Support Unhurried Opportunities for Play by Organising and Allowing Sufficient Time

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to identify and use information from observation and reflection. In this subchapter, you will consider sufficient time in providing children's unhurried play opportunities.



Imagine you have set yourself up to watch a movie you have wanted to see for quite some time; the telephone is off the hook, and you have set aside time to watch the movie. Imagine how you would feel if this happens: halfway through the movie, just as an important scene is unfolding, someone barges into your lounge room, turns off the television and announces: 'Okay, pack away time, it is time for outdoor play. You have two minutes'. This happens all too often in early childhood settings and is a source of immense frustration amongst children. What if a child is creating a magnificent structure that they are engrossed in, but to them, it is only half-finished? Do you expect that child to ruin their project? What message are you sending to them about their work? Are you valuing and recognising their efforts, or are you dismissing their project as disposable? It would be morale-deflating for children to pack up an unfinished piece of artwork or construction activity.

Thus, it is vital that you organise activities that allow for sufficient time. Below are ways you can support unhurried play opportunities for children:

- Implement service provisions for children to follow their interests for extended lengths of time. Of course, play is only one of the vital aspects of children's growth and development. However, provisions should be set in place to allow, for example, a few minutes of time allowance for children to finish what they are doing.
- Set routines that provide a secure and predictable environment. Routines allow you to establish a more-or-less fixed time, putting children's skills and speed of completion already into consideration.
- If children are still not done despite the time allowance, set a provision such as, for example, leaving a note for the cleaner to avoid disturbing the structure in the block corner or area as this is still a 'work in progress.'



### Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Example of situations where you can apply teamwork and collaboration include the following:
  - Problem-solving
  - Managing conflict
  - Talking and listening
  - Backing each other up
  - Accepting each other's differences
2. Observation refers to the act of looking after and watching over children as they perform different activities and interact with others. It is objective rather than subjective.
3. Reflection is a practice that involves a close and constant examination of 'all aspects of events and experiences from different perspectives.' It factors in your personal thoughts and feelings.





## Learning Activity for Chapter 1

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

## II. Support Children's Agency Through Play and Learning



In the previous chapter, you learnt about creating environments for children's play, including selecting and setting up areas, resources, and materials (including the use of real, natural and recycled materials), collaborating with colleagues, identifying and using information from observations and reflection, and supporting unhurried opportunities for through sufficient time. While the previous chapter focused more on planning the play environment, this chapter will focus more on supporting children's agency. This requires you to engage with children and recognise and implement opportunities for children's learning as they play in the environments you provided.

Supporting children's agency is just as important as creating appropriate play environments for children. The EYLF defines children's agency as 'being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world.' In doing so, you need to plan decisions through intentional teaching, provide opportunities for children to decide for themselves during play, and respond to children through opportunities for discussion as they play.

This chapter will guide you on how to support children's agency through play and learning, including:

- Initiating play with children or following their lead based on the type of activity and the needs and preferences of individual children
- Recognising and responding to opportunities to engage children in developmentally appropriate discussion about their play and learning
- Using routines to undertake intentional teaching and recognising opportunities for spontaneous learning consistent with the learning framework
- Prompting extensions of play through flexible use of experiences, resources and materials
- Assisting children to participate in a variety of experiences and supporting them to choose those which support their competency and confidence
- Encouraging participation where an experience is new or unknown
- Demonstrating respect for children's choice not to participate
- Responding to children's engagement with play environments in ways that encourage each child to remain interested and challenged
- Interacting with children showing enthusiasm, playfulness and enjoyment

### **Practices to Support Children's Agency**

Supporting children's agency is outlined in Element 1.2.3 of the NQS, which recognises children's rights to make choices and decisions. Practices to support children's agency include the following:

- **Intentional teaching**

Intentional teaching refers to educators being 'deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful' with regards to children's learning. In other words, when educators carefully plan decisions and set the environment for children's learning, children will be able to achieve learning outcomes that develop their self-identity, self-confidence, and their ability to make decisions.

- **Genuine decision-making**

Simply, this refers to allowing children to make decisions for themselves by setting an environment that features a variety of play experiences and supporting their play through positive reinforcements (i.e. requests and positive phrases).

- **Responsive interactions**

This refers to engaging children in discussions or conversations (e.g. question and answer) and adapting the service program and learning environment according to children's ideas.



### Further Reading

Linked below is a website containing information sheets from ACECQA that provides additional information about the different quality areas of the NQS.

Read more about supporting children's agency by clicking the link below. When you have accessed the website, find and click the information sheet entitled *Information sheet - QA1 Supporting agency: Involving children in decision making*.

[Information sheets](#)

Note that your service's educational program and practices, including appropriate practices for supporting children's agency, are reflected in your service's policies and procedures. To guide you in your role as an early childhood educator, you need to review these documents as these contain the specifications for provisions such as:

- History and background of the service (including the service's vision and mission)
- Description of the service's teaching approach philosophy, including:
  - The learning framework used (i.e. EYLF)
  - Daily schedules/routines
  - Offsite activities
- Procedures for communicating with parents
- Child development evaluation/feedback



### Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Access and review Sparkling Stars' policies and procedures relevant to the service's educational program and practice through the link below.

[Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Center Information for Parents](#)

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## Theories of Play and Learning

Before you proceed further, you must know the theories pertaining to children's play and learning. Apart from being able to understand how current childhood education and care practices came to be, this will help you appreciate your role further as an early childhood educator in children's play and learning.

According to the EYLF, there are different theories about children's learning and development that you can refer to and apply in your own practice. These include the following:

- **Developmental theories**

Focus on the processes of change in children's learning and development over time

- **Socio-cultural theories**

Focus on the role of families and cultural groups in children's learning and development

- **Socio-behaviourist theories**

Focus on the role and interaction in shaping children's behaviour

- **Critical theories**

Focus on assumptions about curriculum and the impact of educator's decisions on children

- **Post-structuralist theories**

Offer insights into issues of power, equity and social justice in early childhood settings

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Below is a table of several theorists and their corresponding theories that are currently practised.

Theorist	Theory	Theory in practice
John Dewey (1859–1952)	While it is important for children to work on their own, it is also vital that they interact with their peers and adults. In this way, children will be able to have a sense of belonging in society.	<p>Dewey's theory can be seen in action when early childhood education and care programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote play as a way to help children reconstruct their experiences and gain meaning from it</li> <li>▪ Emphasise learning by doing (e.g. hands-on projects)</li> <li>▪ Place a strong emphasis on problem-solving and critical thinking</li> <li>▪ Include group work and experiences that focus on the development of social skills</li> </ul>
Freidrich Fröbel (1782–1852)	As creative beings, children need to experience an environment where they can learn independently and freely.	<p>Frobel's theory can be seen in action when early childhood education and care programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide free access to a rich range of materials that can be combined to create different things</li> <li>▪ Are educative rather than occupying</li> <li>▪ Adopt an approach to learning which develops children's autonomy and self-confidence</li> </ul>

Theorist	Theory	Theory in practice
Loris Malaguzzi (1920–1994)	Children have the ability to construct their own ideas when they direct their own learning and openly express themselves.	<p>Malaguzzi’s theory can be seen in action when early childhood education and care programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adopt the Reggio Emilia approach</li> <li>▪ Consider teachers (educators) as learners alongside the children</li> <li>▪ Strongly promote parent participation</li> <li>▪ See that play is essential to a child’s wellbeing and learning</li> </ul>
Maria Montessori (1870–1952)	Children learn best when they pursue their interests and learn independently rather than forcing them to learn what is expected of them.	<p>Montessori’s theory can be seen in action when early childhood education and care programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foster respect – respect each child and model ongoing respect for all children and their work</li> <li>▪ Encourage children to learn by providing freedom in a prepared environment</li> <li>▪ Make children the centre of learning</li> <li>▪ Promote play as the child’s work</li> </ul>
Albert Bandura (1925 – present)	Bandura’s Social Cognitive theory states that learning is directly related to observing others during social interactions.	<p>Since the theory is about learning through observation, Bandura’s theory can be seen in action when educators strive to be role-models of good values and behaviour for the children.</p>



Theorist	Theory	Theory in practice
Jean Piaget (1896–1980)	Children's thinking and learning becomes more complex and develops further through several stages.	<p>Piaget's theory can be seen in action when early childhood education and care programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emphasise the child is an active learner</li> <li>▪ Recognise the role of the adult is to follow the lead of the child and provide interesting experiences and materials for exploration, discovery and interaction</li> <li>▪ Reflect the belief that learning should be built around children's interests</li> <li>▪ Have long periods of child-directed or guided play</li> <li>▪ Involve exploration and discovery learning through open-ended experiences</li> <li>▪ Allow children to repeat activities over and over to practise skills and learn different things</li> </ul>
Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925)	Children's development should be balanced, encompassing children's moral, spiritual, creative, intellectual and physical growth.	<p>Steiner's theory can be seen in action when early childhood education and care programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nurture the senses</li> <li>▪ Use natural materials where possible to enhance natural play and develop a sense of beauty and care</li> <li>▪ Give time to play and encourage children to use their imaginations</li> </ul>
Lev Vygotski (1896 – 1934)	His Creative Play Theory states that creative play helps support children's divergent learning and allows them to experience the world from multiple perspectives.	Vygotski's theory can be seen in action when educators help facilitate creative play by giving children opportunities to engage in it freely through unguided and self-regulated play.



Theorist	Theory	Theory in practice
Lev Vygotski (1896 – 1934)	Vygotski's other theory, Imaginative Play Theory, states that imaginative play directly contributes to the development of a child's capacity for self-regulation	This theory can be seen in action when educators provide children with opportunities and resources to engage in imaginative play.
Mildred Parten (1916 – 2009)	Parten's Stages of Play Theory states that the development of a child's social skills is seen in the way he/she plays in a particular stage of social play.	This theory can be seen in action when educators categorise children into different stages of play in order to understand their behaviour better.



### Further Reading

Below are resources you can read to know more about theories relevant to children's play and learning.

[Child Theorists and Their Theories in Practice](#)

[Exploring Reggio Emilia](#)

[The Steiner Approach to Early Childhood Education and Care](#)

[The Froebel Approach](#)

## Stages of Play

Apart from the theories discussed previously, a theory that is still being widely used and adapted today is one identified and developed by Mildred Parten, which revolves around the stages of play. According to Parten, children's play capabilities differ from each stage. Furthermore, the stages of play describe how children's play transitions from a non-social to a social one as children grown in age. Refer to the table below for the six stages of play and their descriptions.

Stages of play	Description
Unoccupied play (0–12 months)	In this stage of play, babies and infants spend more time observing and doing random movements rather than playing.
Solitary Play (0–2 years)	In this stage of play, a child starts to play on his own, focused on their own toys or activity.
Onlooker play (18 months–2½ years)	In this stage of play, a child observes other children play but does not participate.
Parallel play (2½–3 years)	In this stage of play, a child does not participate in other children's play activity but can be observed mimicking other's actions while playing independently.
Associative play (3–4 years)	In this stage of play, a child begins to interact with other children during play; however, the child does not coordinate his play with other children's.
Cooperative play (4–5+ years)	In this stage of play, a child plays and works with children to achieve a common goal (i.e. the purpose of the play). Furthermore, a child begins to recognise their identity and role within a group, which is a sign of social development.



### Further Reading

Linked below is an article by Hip Kids that provides a more detailed discussion about Parten's stages of play. Click the link below to access the article.

[Types and Stages of Play Important for your Child's Development](#)

## Creative and Imaginative Play

As children reach the final stage of Parten's stages of play, they would have already gone through various creative and imaginative play experiences, which contributed to their overall growth and development.

There is a thin line between imaginative and creative play, which is why they are often used interchangeably. On the one hand, imaginative play is a type of play wherein children generate and carry out 'imagined' ideas or concepts — meaning, these ideas are not real and do not exist around the time they were imagined. On the other hand, creative play is a practical process wherein children purposefully carry out their thoughts and ideas.



### Further Reading

The article below provides further discussion of the difference between creativity and imagination. Click the link below to access and read it.

[Imagination is not creativity](#)

Provided below is a table that contains examples of different creative and imaginative play activities commonly applied in the program to illustrate their difference further.

Creative play	Imaginative play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Children engaging in dance</li><li>▪ Children drawing or painting their favourite object, animal, etc.</li><li>▪ Children making beaded crafts (e.g. bead necklaces and bracelets)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Children acting out the movements of animals</li><li>▪ Children mimicking the sounds of things around their environment, such as cars, bells, phones, etc. as they play</li><li>▪ Children doing pretend play or make-believe (e.g. pretending to be a doctor or builder, pretending that invisible objects are there)</li></ul>

## 2.1 Initiate Play With Children or Follow Their Lead Based on the Type of Activity and the Needs and Preferences of Individual Children



In supporting children's agency, you need to encourage children to get going with their play activities, and one way to get them going is to initiate play. This simply means making the first move to invite and engage children to play.

It is important to initiate play since, while some children have a natural inclination to play, others may have difficulty commencing with play due to reasons such as but not limited to:

- Being new to the environment
- Difficulty in interacting with others
- The need for encouragement to play

Apart from that, you may also need to initiate play with children when trying to have a personal conversation with the child to discuss something important or get to know them better.

To effectively initiate play, you need to learn about children's interests and possible ways to support their learning. This may be done by simply spending time conversing in a sensitive manner using simple language, listening to their interests, and taking note of verbal and non-verbal cues such as eye contact and body language.

Also, it is significant to note that you should never interrupt a child who is already engaged in play as this may send a message telling them that what they are doing is not as important as what an adult does or says. Find another opportunity to approach the child, such as when they seem to be available or when they are displaying non-verbal cues (e.g. when they seem to be looking for other activities to engage themselves with).

To initiate play with children, you may do the following:

- Offer children various toys that they can choose from, such as blocks, balls, play dough, etc. This serves as an invitation for children to play with you.

For example, to address a baby's need in terms of improving their motor skills, you may spread toy balls of different colours and sizes within reach, which encourages them to crawl and reach for the balls to play with them. You may also incorporate emphasising sounds or words as the baby plays with the ball to address a baby's need to improve language skills (i.e. mentioning the word 'ball' multiple times).

- Model play by playing with the toys or doing an activity yourself and intentionally showing children your work as they observe you. Children will likely pick up the message as a sort of invitation while letting them feel that they are in an environment where they are free to do the activity themselves.

For example, when inviting children to play an outdoor activity of playing in the sand, you need to go to the sandbox yourself and make a sandcastle, for example. As a complement, you may also say words of invitation such as, 'Come, let us build a castle!'

When initiating indoor activity such as painting, you can show your work to children and say, 'Do you want to make something like this?'

As discussed earlier, some children are naturally inclined to initiating play themselves. This means that they are more likely to do activities they prefer and invite you to join them. When children invite you to follow their lead, let children remain in control of the game. Remember, you are learning their rules too!

In following children's lead during play, remember the following:

- **Know your role.**

For example, in dressing up for pretend play, children will usually choose the clothes of their preferred character, for example, a doctor. This means that you need to play as the patient.

- **Engage with children by asking questions or asking for their help.**

For example, when the child leads you to play with play dough, you may say, 'Can you show me how to do it?'

- **Respond to non-verbal cues.**

This is especially applicable to babies who do not yet have the ability to speak. For example, children may invite you to play with them by passing you a toy. You may also mimic what the child does, such as taking turns tossing a ball.

Note that the ones mentioned are only a few of the examples of how children may invite you. Through constant observation, you will begin to see a pattern of children's personalities and approach, which you can use as a basis for interacting with them in the future.



## 2.2 Recognise and Respond to Opportunities to Engage Children in Developmentally Appropriate Discussion About Their Play and Learning

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to initiate children's play or follow children's lead during play. As you engage with children during play, you must take advantage of opportunities for discussion about their play and learning.

Opportunities for discussion may come in the form of spontaneous *teachable moments*. Teachable moments are timely moments that pique children's curiosity, usually triggered by certain conversations or situations. In the context of children's play, examples may include but are not limited to:

- Children looking intently and examining balls of different sizes and colour
- Children asking questions, such as 'How do you make a paper plane?'
- Children approaching and asking you to help them with something (e.g. asking you to play a game with them)

When you recognise opportunities such as the ones mentioned, you must respond by answering these questions or asking them open-ended questions to arouse their curiosity. Taking into consideration those examples mentioned, below are ways you can respond:

- **Children looking intently and examining balls of different sizes and colour**

In this situation, you can describe the balls to the baby by saying, 'This one is red.' while touching or pointing at the red ball. If the child is just starting to talk, you may also repeat words for children to mimic, such as repeating and prolonging the word ball when saying 'This is called a ball.'

For older children, you can ask, 'Which ball is bigger, this one or that one?' You can also make them group the balls with similar sizes or colours.

- **Children asking questions, such as 'How do you make a paper plane?'**

In this situation, you can teach them how to make a paper plane, and while doing so, you can incorporate open-ended questions, such as:

- Can you tell me what colour this paper is?
- How big was the aeroplane that you saw yesterday?
- How is an aeroplane different from a boat?

- **Children approaching and asking you to help them with something (e.g. asking you to play a game with them)**

In this situation, you can ask them open-ended questions while playing the game, such as:

- Who did you play this game with before?
- How did you learn this game?
- What are the rules of the game?
- How do you feel when you earn a point?

When engaging with children about their play and learning, always remember to listen to children's ideas and responses and ask them open-ended questions, in compliance with Element 1.2.2 of the NQS. Incorporating open-ended questions allows children to build self-confidence in communicating and improves their learning.



### Further Reading

Read the articles below to learn more about recognising and responding to teachable moments.

[Using Open Ended Questions with Children](#)

[Making the most of teachable moments](#)



## 2.3 Use Routines to Undertake Intentional Teaching and Recognise Opportunities for Spontaneous Learning Consistent With the Learning Framework

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to recognise and respond to opportunities to engage children in developmentally appropriate discussions about their play and learning.

Intentional teaching is outlined in Element 1.2.1 of the NQS. According to the EYLF, intentional teaching is being 'deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful' and recognises that 'learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning.'

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Routines involve a planned provocation that is presented during a moment in the room's routine group time or during another regular occurrence during the day, such as at mealtimes. Refer to the table below for some intentional teaching practices and their definitions which you can incorporate as routines to extend children's thinking and learning:

Intentional teaching practices	Description
Challenging	Offering children opportunities to extend their skills and ideas in the context of secure relationships. Educators gauge when to offer challenges and opportunities that will extend children's thinking through provocation and reflection.
Collaborating	Enabling children to take the lead in an investigation or an idea while working alongside them to contribute to, rather than dominate, the direction of the experience. This can also include involving others, such as family members and members of the community, who may have particular expertise or knowledge that can inform the learning.
Encouraging	Supporting, particularly when children are making an effort, through making comments that motivate and encourage them to persist.

Intentional teaching practices	Description
Explaining	Making ideas and requests clear for children. This is useful at times when children want or need to understand a concept or idea, often about their own and others' safety or rights.
Identifying	Drawing children's attention to new ideas and topics. Pointing out things of interest may generate areas for exploration and investigation.
Imagining	Creating an environment where children are encouraged to use imagination and creativity to investigate, hypothesise and express themselves. Educators plan for children to have opportunities where there is the freedom to engage in experiences with no set expectations for outcomes and where children can explore their own possibilities.
Instructing	Using techniques that engage children and are respectful of children's ideas. Educators use direct instruction when other strategies might not be appropriate. For example, teaching children about road safety on an outing requires educators to be clear about their expectations for children and to identify the safe practices needed in these types of situations.
Listening	Encouraging children to lead conversations through listening deeply and thoughtfully to what they are saying. Through actively responding to children's contributions, educators create opportunities for authentic and sustained conversational exchanges.
Making connections	Assisting children to see relationships and incongruities. Educators contribute to children's thinking by comparing and contrasting experiences and ideas.

Intentional teaching practices	Description
Modelling	Demonstrating a skill or how a task is done. Modelling should always be supported with opportunities for children to have a go at recognising the skill themselves.
Negotiating	Enabling children to have a go at solving problems and addressing complex issues. Educators provide 'scaffolding' to allow children to see multiple sides to an argument or issue and encourage children to find reasonable solutions that can address their own and others' perspectives.
Providing for choice	Offering opportunities for children to make choices. This involves recognising children's capacities to make safe choices and experience the consequences of their actions. Provisions for choice need to be well considered in the context of the relationships and should not place children at risk or in danger. Supporting children to make choices is valuable when autonomy and independence are encouraged.
Questioning	Engaging children in a sensitive way in thinking and problem-solving. Questions should be genuine and respectful and not used to gather responses already known by educators. Educators should encourage children to ask questions about themselves and their own peers.
Researching	Working with children to find out and investigate. This can involve asking others, using the internet and local library or telephoning relevant agencies. Researching helps children learn about the many ways of finding solutions and gathering information.

Intentional teaching practices	Description
Revisiting and revising	Taking the opportunity to revisit experiences and engage in thinking that enables children to reflect on and build on prior learning.
Scaffolding	Using knowledge of children's abilities. Educators can break down tasks and ideas and provide children with a supportive framework for taking the next steps or moving onto a higher level of thinking.

*Intentional teaching practices*, © State of Queensland (QCAA) 2019, licensed under CC BY 4.0.

While establishing routines is important for children's learning, it is also important to recognise spontaneous learning opportunities, as stated in the EYLF. As discussed in the previous chapter, spontaneous learning opportunities come in the form of *teachable moments*, which are quick moments wherein children's curiosity are the highest.

To recognise opportunities for spontaneous learning, you need to note certain behaviours that reflect children's interest and curiosity. As discussed in the previous subchapter, behaviours may include the following examples:

- Children looking intently and examining balls of different sizes and colour
- Children asking questions, such as 'How do you make a paper plane?'
- Children approaching and asking you to help them with something (e.g. asking you to play a game with them)

When these opportunities present themselves, it is vital to respond by further stimulating their learning through question and answer.

## 2.4 Prompt Extensions of Play Through Flexible Use of Experiences, Resources and Materials



In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to use routines to undertake intentional teaching and recognise spontaneous learning opportunities. As children spend time playing, it is important to further stimulate and improve their learning by extending children's play.

According to the EYLF, the educator's role extends beyond providing toys and resources for children's enjoyment. It emphasises the active role of the educator in providing rich play-based learning experiences for children.

As an early childhood educator, it is your role to provide ways to extend children's play while not disrupting the child's play experience. Simply, to extend children's play means to provide additional elements in children's play to further their play experience. This involves the flexible use of experiences, resources, and materials.

To illustrate further, examples are provided below.

### **Use of Experience**

- Say, for example, the game of *Catch a Dragon by the Tail*, wherein the front child (head) tries to catch the last child on the line (tail). To enhance each child's play experience, you can have them assigned a different position after each round of the game (i.e. assign them as the head when they have already tried being the tail). In this way, you can also enhance children's communication and leadership skills as being the head, or the tail provides different play experiences.
- One kind of toys that children usually play with are animal toys. You can extend their play experience and further their imagination by visiting the zoo or watching video documentaries about animals. This way, children will be able to see how animals behave in the real world and incorporate this new knowledge into their imaginative play.

### **Use of Resources**

- For arts and crafts activities such as drawing, colouring, or painting, you can deliberately hang on the wall or place in the art area sample paintings or images featuring different colours and lines, which children can refer to and apply in their drawings or artwork.
- For kitchen pretend play, you can incorporate real kitchenware such as wooden spatulas and utensils, serving tray, condiments container, and others to help children develop a sense of reality in playing.

### **Use of Materials**

- With regards to playing play dough, you may provide children with one or a limited number of colours to be used. After a while, you may incorporate another set of playdough with new colours to pique children's interest in variations in colour.
- With regards to sand play, you may have provided children with the usual materials such as pail, shovel, trowel, and others. To extend children's play experience, you may provide them with various shape moulds and sand water. This way, they can mould sand to different shapes and sizes according to their liking.



Remember that while extensions of play are vital in enhancing children's play experiences, children may show signs of disinterest or behaviours indicating they do not like or are uncomfortable with the extensions of play provided. Thus, it is important that the extensions of play you provide are flexible, which means that they can be easily modified or altered to adapt to children's needs and different situations.



### Further Reading

Read the article linked below to know more about ways to extend children's play.

[Five ways to extend play & five strategies to achieve this](#)



## **2.5 Assist Children to Participate in a Variety of Experiences and Support Them to Choose Those Which Support Their Creativity, Competency and Confidence**

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to prompt extensions of play. In this subchapter, you will focus more on how to assist children to participate in various experiences and support them with the activities they choose for themselves.

Children are used to having adults make decisions for them throughout their day — what to eat, what to wear, and when to sleep. However, as discussed earlier, there is a chance for children to attain agency through play. During play, children have the opportunity to make decisions, which is important for their developing identity as it builds feelings of self-competence and self-confidence.

Below are some ways you can do to assist children to participate in a variety of experiences:

- Provide different play activities for children. For example, you can set up separate corners for arts and crafts, puzzles and games, and books.
- Invite a child to perform an activity through modelling. For example, when inviting a child to create shapes with play dough, you should go to the play dough corner and mould the playdough yourself. The child will most likely observe what you are doing and try doing it themselves.
- Apart from modelling, you can also verbally engage them to join you in doing the activity. For example:
  - ‘Can you hand me those crayons, please?’
  - ‘Can you tell me what animal is that on the puzzle?’

Providing children with opportunities to make decisions for themselves helps build their sense of responsibility and decision-making skills. It is imperative to ensure that the choice really is theirs, but you may provide choices that you will be satisfied with regardless of which one they choose. By showing interest in their choice, you reinforce in their minds the idea that their decisions are as important.

From observing children play, you will begin to see, for example, that a child begins to create higher or more sophisticated building blocks or that a child can create a paper plane by themselves, without an adult’s help anymore. Both examples are only two of the many situations that indicate a child’s competency and confidence. As these situations unfold, you need to make sure that you support them to continue doing what they are good at and enjoy doing.





To support children, you can reinforce their actions verbally by:

- Politely asking them to do something for you (i.e. requesting). For example:
  - 'Can you make me a paper plane?'
  - 'Can you help me build this tower?'
  - 'Can you colour this part of the drawing for me?'
- Using positive phrases. For example:
  - 'This is wonderful!'
  - 'Well done!'
  - 'You are very good at this!'

Often, children are confident at doing things they like and are good at. As an early childhood educator, you must guide them through doing those things that build their self-esteem and purpose.



### Further Reading

Linked below is an article that provides a discussion regarding helping children feel competent and capable. Click the link below:

[Ages & Stages: Helping Children Feel Competent & Capable](#)

## 2.6 Encourage Participation Where an Experience is New or Unknown

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to assist children to participate in a variety of experiences and guide them to choose those which support their competency and confidence. This subchapter will focus more on encouraging children's participation in new or unknown experiences.

In some cases, children become reluctant to join in an experience that is not familiar to them. They may perceive new and unfamiliar environments as dangerous, intimidating, or uncomfortable, which leads them to refuse to participate in an experience. Apart from that, children may feel:

- Confused about how to participate
- Embarrassed at the thought of failing
- Overwhelmed by the complexity of the experience
- Fearful of trying something new
- Angry at being made to do something that does not interest them

Thus, it is the role of the educator to reflect on the reasons why that child is reluctant to join in the experience so as to implement measures to address the matter at hand.



This is another reason why it is important to involve children in the planning process. When children are prepared for a new experience, they are far less likely to become reluctant and refuse to become involved in it. Preparation might take the form of discussion, whereby children can express their fears, doubts, or interest, or it might involve them in gathering equipment and setting the experience up. By doing this, children are able to give educators ideas as to how the experience might be made less threatening, more interesting and, therefore, more appealing.

Some ways you can encourage and engage children's participation in new or unknown experiences include the following:

- Initiate children's activity and be a role model as children will most likely participate if they see you doing the activity yourself.
- Go easy on the child, especially during their first trials. Children may be overwhelmed if they find the activity difficult to do at first and become discouraged as a result.
- Use positive phrases to reinforce children's participation, such as 'Well done!' or 'Good job!'
- When children cannot get it right the first time, let them feel that it is completely normal and give them another chance to try again.
- Converse with children about 'what is wrong.' Knowing the reason why they feel uncomfortable or afraid, for example, will help you find the true cause of their reluctance to join and allows you to apply measures to address the issue.
- Encourage a child's peers to participate in the activity. When a child sees that their friends are doing an activity together, they will most likely join in on the fun.
- Provide children with toys that they like
- Structure activities that utilise children's creativity and imagination

## 2.7 Demonstrate Respect for Children's Choice Not to Participate

In the previous subchapter, you learnt about ways to encourage children to participate in new or unknown play experiences. As discussed in that subchapter, children may find new or unknown experiences intimidating and overwhelming, leading them to become reluctant to or refuse such experiences.



Despite efforts to encourage and engage children to participate, there is always the possibility that children will choose not to participate. Note that as children can make decisions for themselves, there is a chance that they prefer to do other activities instead of the ones you invite them to do. Remember that it is a child's right to decide not to participate in an activity. Therefore, you must respect it.

Below are ways you can demonstrate respect for children who choose not to participate in an activity:

- Verbally acknowledge children's choice not to participate. This is significant so as to assure children that they are not doing something wrong and make them feel that they are not being left out.
- Do not make any snide remarks regarding children's choice not to participate.
- Offer children various choices of participating. For example, if they opt not to join in the team contest, you may invite them to pick and cheer for a team or have them assist you with preparing and arranging necessary materials.
- Acknowledge children's uniqueness by adapting the activity to cater for their unique abilities, skills, and interests. As a result, children may feel like they are going to change their minds and join in.

Apart from the points mentioned above, one important way that you can demonstrate respect for children who do not participate is by involving them in the planning process. As discussed previously, involving children in the planning allows them to express their fears, reservations, or misunderstandings about certain activities and share things or activities they consider fun and desirable. Knowing what children think about things will be of great help as you establish strategies to make children's play experiences better.

## 2.8 Respond to Children's Engagement With Play Environments in Ways That Encourage Each Child to Remain Interested and Challenged

An educator's knowledge of children's development will enable them to 'read' children's verbal and non-verbal communications to determine when children are inviting them to join in on their play. For example, a six-month-old child will not be able to verbalise the sentence 'I do not know how to use this toy, can you help me?'; however, they will make eye contact, reach towards an object, and make sounds to express their emotions. By observing children in the service environment, you will begin to learn the language of each child and respond accordingly.



As important as it is to respond to a child's invitation to play, it is just as important to avoid the temptation to take over the play situation and let the children control the experience. By participating passively, an educator can help to subtly maintain a positive atmosphere and role model cooperative behaviours. Adults will naturally want to direct the actions of children, but this will only cause children's feelings of frustration and ineptitude.

There is also the possibility of children showing behaviour such as not doing an activity with the usual enthusiasm or frequency. This may be caused by play environments that are either becoming mundane or too complex for the child to do. To address such issues, you need to implement ways to encourage each child to remain interested and challenged in their play. Examples include but are not limited to the following.

- Enrich their play by providing a wide range of interesting play materials.
- Protect their play from unnecessary interruptions and providing enough time for them to develop their play ideas and themes.
- Be prepared to participate in their imaginative activities.
- Facilitate and encourage their play by talking about their play.
- Accept their invitations to play, follow their lead and give your full attention.
- Be spontaneous and enthusiastic in interactions as children play.



## 2.9 Interact With Children Showing Enthusiasm, Playfulness and Enjoyment



Overall, in supporting children's agency, you need to show enthusiasm, playfulness, and enjoyment. When children see that you are enthused and playful and enjoy playing with them, they are likely to pick up that energy and become even more enthused, playful, and appreciative towards their own work. It gives them a sense of enjoyment, fulfilment, and encouragement to play further and learn as much as they can.

Being enthusiastic means being genuinely interested in children's play. Some examples of showing enthusiasm include:

- Asking children about their work. For example:
  - 'What is that you are drawing?'
  - 'How did you turn sand into a cake?'
  - 'What sound does this animal make?'
- Commenting on their work. For example:
  - 'That is a huge building!'
  - 'Your drawing is really colourful!'

- Using positive language. For example:
  - ‘Good job!’
  - ‘This is wonderful!’

Being playful simply means reflecting children’s liveliness, cheerfulness, and carefreeness. It also means being genuinely involved in children’s play, as well as being responsive to their invitation to play or engage. This includes dancing when children dance or singing when children sing.

On the other hand, enjoyment can be shown by constantly wearing an infectious smile and laughing with children throughout their play. When children see that you are amused, it gives them a sense of assurance that what they are doing is right, which furthers their sense of agency.

It is important that you always show enthusiasm, playfulness, and enjoyment when interacting with children. Otherwise, children might pick up the wrong signals (i.e. thinking that they are doing something wrong), which can result in children ceasing to enjoy their play activities.

Note that your service’s policies and procedures contain specifications and guidelines relevant to children-educator relationships and relationships between children, particularly:

- educator child interaction
- educator intervention during conflicts between children
- comforting and assisting children during accidents or injuries
- procedures for reporting suspected abuse.



## Sparkling Stars Early Years Learning Centre

Access and review Sparkling Stars’ policies and procedures relevant to relationships with children through the link below:

[Child Protection Policy](#)

*(username: newusername password: new password)*



## Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Teachable moments are timely moments that pique children's curiosity, usually triggered by certain conversations or situations.
2. Intentional teaching is being 'deliberate, purposeful and thoughtful' and recognises that 'learning occurs in social contexts and that interactions and conversations are vitally important for learning.'
3. To extend children's play means to provide additional elements in children's play to further their play experience. This involves the flexible use of experiences, resources, and materials.
4. The EYLF defines children's agency as 'being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world.' During play, children have the opportunity to make decisions, which is important for their developing identity as it builds feelings of self-competence and self-confidence.
5. It is a child's right to decide not to participate in an activity. Therefore, you must respect it.
6. When children see that you are enthused and playful and enjoy playing with them, they are likely to pick up that energy and become even more enthused, playful, and appreciative towards their work as well.



## Learning Activity for Chapter 2

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.



### III. Review and Evaluate Play Opportunities



In the previous chapter, you learnt about supporting children's agency, which touched on concepts and practices such as intentional teaching, genuine decision-making, and responsive interactions with children. In this chapter, you will review and evaluate the play opportunities you provided, which will require you to look back and reflect on children's experiences and observations of children's learning to know whether the play opportunities you provided were adequate or needs to be modified.

Furthermore, in reviewing and evaluating play opportunities provided, you need to look at the EYLF learning outcomes and analyse whether children have achieved these outcomes or not. More importantly, you need to reflect on your own pedagogical practices to be constantly reminded of your role as an early childhood educator.

This chapter will thoroughly discuss reviewing and evaluating play opportunities, including:

- Holistically evaluating the implementation of play and learning opportunities
- Reflecting on children's play experience to identify learning and development outcomes
- Analysing outcomes to identify opportunities for further learning and development
- Identifying role of the educator in children's play and learning through reflection on own pedagogical practices

### 3.1 Holistically Evaluate the Implementation of Play and Learning Opportunities



To ensure that children are provided with wholesome play and learning experiences, it is necessary to holistically evaluate the service's implementation of play and learning opportunities. Holistic evaluation means looking into children's overall wellbeing (including physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, and cognitive aspects of learning) during the assessment of play and learning opportunities.

Holistic evaluation involves observing and reflecting on the results of the service's program plan, including how you set up play environments and support children's agency. Even the way you evaluate needs to be assessed to make sure that your evaluation method works effectively. Generally, you need to look into the following when holistically evaluating play and learning opportunities:

- What worked and what did not work
- What learning took place
- Ways to support children's development and learning

To be more detailed, you need to consider the following:

- If the outcomes stated in the EYLF are achieved by children
- If children did or did not enjoy the experience
- Whether the service's program is effective, including (but not limited to):
  - Routines and changes
  - Safety measures
  - Group times
  - Inclusivity in the aspect of race, religion, culture, etc.
- If suggestions from families were incorporated into the program
- If children's perspectives, sentiments, and interests were considered in the program

The evaluation stage requires you and your colleagues and children and their families to engage in discussions regarding the service's program. Each person will have their unique thoughts and observations to draw upon and offer a meaningful and important reflection, especially regarding how children's experience links to the EYLF practices, principles, and learning outcomes.

Aside from discussions with relevant people, you will also refer to and look closely at your recorded observations, samples of a child's work, photographs, and information shared by the family. Then, you should reflect on the following questions:

- How does the information fit together?
- How does the information link to learning outcomes set prior?
- How have the child's learning and development progressed?

By summing up what has been gathered, you will gain greater insight into children's relationships with others, the cultural context of the information, interactions with children, and children learning styles and interests in a holistic way. As a result, you will be able to think of other services and supports to better support a child's learning and development. During this process, you and other educators may draw on educational theories and knowledge to support your interpretations of where the child is at and where they need to go next.



## Further Reading

The article linked below from CareforKids.com.au provides further discussion about behaviours you should expect from children to indicate that learning outcomes have been achieved. You can use this in the holistic evaluation of children's play and learning opportunities provided by your service.

[What outcomes should parents expect from early childhood education and care?](#)

## Methods Used to Evaluate Implementation of Play Experiences

As mentioned, the implementation of children's play experiences needs to be holistically evaluated to ensure that children are provided with wholesome learning and development play opportunities.

According to the State of Victoria's Department of Education and Training (2017), there are three kinds of assessment methods used in early childhood education, namely:

- Assessment **of** learning and development

This method summarises what children know, understand, and can do at a particular point in time. This employs strategies such as:

- [The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy \(NAPLAN\)](#)
- [Australian Early Development Census](#)
- Summary statements, such as a [Transition Learning and Development Statement](#)

- Assessment **as** learning and development

This method requires the active involvement of children in the assessment of their learning and development. It involves asking children what they learnt, how they learned with adults and peers, and who helped them learn the things they learned, which provides an opportunity for them to monitor their learning and can be used by educators to inform future practices.

- Assessment **for** learning and development

This method requires educators to use inferences based on evidence (i.e. children's works and outputs) to determine children's progress and inform teaching practices. In doing so, educators are required to perform critical reflection and discussion with colleagues, families, children, and other professionals.



## Further Reading

Page 6–7 of the document linked below provides a more in-depth discussion regarding the methods of assessment mentioned above. Click the link below to access the document published by the Victoria State Government Department of Education and Training.

[Practice Guide: Assessment for learning and development](#)

## Adapting Play for Differing Interests, Ages and Abilities

As mentioned earlier, the evaluation stage allows you to identify what went right and what went wrong and think of other ways to support children’s learning and development. One of the ways you can apply is by adapting children’s play.

Adapting children’s play means incorporating changes in children’s play activity or the play environment to accommodate the following:

- **Differing interests**

As each child is unique, each has their own set of skills and interests. Some children may prefer to spend a lot of time in the arts and crafts corner, creating a drawing of their favourite animal or smudging colours all over the paper, while others prefer to play *run and chase* outside with their peers. It is vital that children’s differing interests are incorporated in the program plan in order for them to not only improve what they are already good at and build their confidence but, more importantly, to have fun.

In other words, while it is significant to employ a structured approach in order for children to absorb experiences and achieve learning outcomes, it is just as important for them to have an avenue where they can be truly themselves. To do this, you can, for example, adjust daily educator-directed play activities and squeeze in ample time for free play, wherein children are free to do what they want or feel like doing. In doing so, make sure that you refer to prior observations regarding each child’s interest and set up the appropriate play environment according to these interests.

- **Ages**

One important consideration in adapting play is children’s ages. Of course, for children to achieve the desired learning outcomes, they need to experience play and learning opportunities appropriate to their age.

For example, you realise upon evaluation that there is a need to further children's cognitive development and found out that books currently provided in the service are appropriate only for children aged five years above. To address this, you can replace current books with those that contain more graphics or images more appropriate for children who are five years old and below.

#### ▪ **Abilities**

In adapting to children's play, you need to provide an environment that welcomes children with disabilities or special needs. This does not mean providing an entirely separate and 'special' program for these children, but making a play activity 'as special as necessary' — focusing on ways to assist these children to achieve the learning outcomes rather than focusing on their disability.

One example of how to adapt play is by placing toys or art materials on the table for easier access, rather than having these children get the toys or art materials from the original container. Another example would be adapting the pretend-play wardrobe to include replicas of equipment used by children with disabilities such as canes, wheelchairs, glasses, etc.



#### **Further Reading**

Read the article below to read more about adapting play for children with disabilities or special needs.

[Adapting Activities & Materials for Young Children with Disabilities](#)

[Adapting the Child Care Environment for Children with Special Needs](#)

Careful observation on how children interact with their environment and each other will tell you whether children are becoming bored, frustrated, or uninvolved with experiences. When this happens, it does not mean that educators should make radical, sweeping changes to the entire environment or the play activity. Small, subtle additions or exchanges of materials are often all that is needed to address the issues raised, and they will be twice as effective if they are based on the children's known interests and ability levels.

Sometimes, even the most fantastic experience can be met with total indifference by children. This can usually be attributed to a lack of collaboration during the planning process. When this occurs, it is important not to feel disheartened, instead, view it as a learning experience and reflect on the children's reactions to either modify the experience or try to reintroduce it with a greater emphasis on child involvement.



### 3.2 Reflect on Children's Play Experience to Identify Learning and Development Outcomes

In the previous chapter, you learnt about how to holistically evaluate the implementation of children's play and learning opportunities. As discussed, the evaluation process requires you to look closely at details such as whether children enjoyed the learning experiences or not and those aspects of the program that 'worked' for children to achieve the learning outcomes in the EYLF. The learning outcomes in the EYLF are as follows:



- **Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity**
  - 1.1 Children feel safe, secure, and supported
  - 1.2 Children develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency
  - 1.3 Children develop knowledgeable and confident self identities
  - 1.4 Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect
- **Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world**
  - 2.1 Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation
  - 2.2 Children respond to diversity with respect
  - 2.3 Children become aware of fairness
  - 2.4 Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment
- **Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing**
  - 3.1 Children become strong in their social and emotional wellbeing
  - 3.2 Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing

▪ **Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners**

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

▪ **Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators**

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

Sourced from [The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#), used under CC BY 4.0.

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### Further Reading

Click the link below to access the ACECQA website, which contains the approved learning frameworks. Under 'National approved learning frameworks', click the link entitled *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (EYLF)*. This will redirect you to the PDF file, which you can read to further know more about the learning outcomes.

[Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia \(EYLF\)](#)





Your focus in this subchapter will be reflecting on children's experiences to identify what development and learning outcomes were achieved by children. As discussed previously in Subchapter 1.4, reflection involves gathering information and gaining insights that 'support, inform and enrich decision-making about children's learning.' Aside from your own personal perspective, you can engage with your colleagues in discussion to acquire their perspective on children's experiences.

To identify learning and development outcomes achieved by children, you need to refer to prior observation and other documentation such as children's work, photographs, and video recordings of children playing and information from children's families. In doing so, you will be able to identify and look into certain behaviours that indicate whether a child achieved the learning and development outcomes or not.

Below is a table containing children's behaviours and the corresponding developmental outcomes and EYLF learning outcomes (including the NQS area) achieved by children (ages three to five years old) displaying the indicated behaviours, which you can refer to when reflecting on children's experience. The table below is adapted from the document *Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards*, developed by Community Child Care Co-operative Ltd (NSW) to provide support for early childhood educators to implement the EYLF.

Developmental areas	Behaviours displayed by children	EYLF outcomes achieved, including the corresponding NQS quality area
<b>Cognitive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counts five to ten things</li> <li>Recalls events correctly</li> <li>Can match and name some colours</li> <li>Takes on pretend character roles</li> <li>Understands opposites (e.g. big/little) and positional words (e.g. middle, end)</li> </ul>	<p><b>EYLF Outcome 5:</b> Children are effective communicators - Children express ideas and make meaning using a range of media. E.g. 'use language and engage in play to imagine and create roles, scripts, and ideas.'</p> <p><b>NQS:</b> Areas 1, 5</p>
<b>Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asks many questions</li> <li>Enjoys jokes, rhymes and stories</li> <li>Tells stories</li> <li>Answers simple questions</li> <li>Takes part in conversation</li> </ul>	<p><b>EYLF Outcome 5:</b> Children are effective communicators - Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking. E.g. 'Provide children with access to a range of technologies.'</p> <p><b>NQS:</b> Areas 1, 5, 6, 7</p>
<b>Physical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climbs steps with alternating feet</li> <li>Exhibits hand preference</li> <li>Walks and runs more smoothly</li> <li>Attempts to catch ball with hands</li> <li>Climbs playground equipment</li> </ul>	<p><b>EYLF Outcome 3:</b> Children have a strong sense of wellbeing - Children take increasing responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing. E.g. 'Promote continuity of children's personal health and hygiene by sharing ownership of routines and schedules with children, families and the community.'</p> <p><b>NQS:</b> Areas 1, 2, 3, 5, 6</p>

Developmental areas	Behaviours displayed by children	EYLF outcomes achieved, including the corresponding NQS quality area
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Enjoys playing with other children</li> <li>▪ May have a particular friend</li> <li>▪ Shares, smiles and cooperates with peers</li> <li>▪ Jointly manipulates objects with one or two other peers</li> <li>▪ Develops independence and social skills they will use for learning and getting on with others at preschool and school</li> </ul>	<p><b>EYLF Outcome 1:</b> Children have a strong sense of identity - Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect. E.g. 'express a wide range of emotions, thoughts and views constructively.'</p> <p><b>NQS:</b> Areas 1, 5, 6</p>
<b>Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Understands when someone is hurt and comforts them</li> <li>▪ May enforce gender-role norms with pers</li> <li>▪ May show bouts of aggression with peers</li> <li>▪ May praise themselves and be boastful</li> <li>▪ Attains gender stability (i.e. sure she/he is a girl/boy)</li> </ul>	<p><b>EYLF Outcome 2:</b> Children are connected with and contribute to their world - Children respond to diversity with respect. E.g. 'plan experiences and provide resources that broaden children's perspectives and encourage appreciation of diversity.'</p> <p><b>NQS:</b> Areas 1, 2, 5, 6</p>



### Further Reading

Click the link below to access the document *Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards*, which contains separate tables based on children's age. The tables also include information on children's behaviours to look out for, which require advice to be sought.

[Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards](#)

## 3.3 Analyse Outcomes to Identify Opportunities for Further Learning and Development

In the previous subchapter, you learnt how to reflect on children's play experiences to identify learning and development outcomes. Together with identifying learning and development outcomes, analysing outcomes to identify further learning and development opportunities forms part of the holistic evaluation of play and learning opportunities provided.



As mentioned in Subchapter 3.1, you will be able to think of ways to better support a child's learning and development through your own and your colleague's reflection of children's experiences. To do so, you need to analyse outcomes by:

- Reviewing the accomplished learning and development outcomes previously identified (discussed in the previous subchapter) and examining whether there are ways to improve learning and development opportunities currently provided or the opportunities provided are already sufficient.
- Reviewing learning and development outcomes not achieved by children, including:
  - Identifying children's behaviours that require advice to be sought (refer to the document [Developmental milestones and the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards](#)).
  - Examining the current learning and development opportunities for children to identify any flaws or deficiencies which may have hindered children from achieving the developmental and learning outcomes.

To simplify things further, you can analyse outcomes by asking yourself the following questions:

- Did the children enjoy the learning and development opportunities provided?
- From a developmental viewpoint, what behaviours exhibited by children are of concern?
- What can I do to address these behaviours? Who are the people with whom I should consult and brainstorm?
- In what areas (e.g. environment, experiences, resources) can I incorporate any changes or modifications to improve children's learning experiences?
- Were the expected developmental and learning outcomes achieved accordingly to the original plan?
- What extensions can I provide to improve the current development and learning opportunities to enhance individual children's skills and interests?

To illustrate further, refer to the situation below:

John, an early childhood educator, analyses a three-year-old child's development in terms of communicating with peers and adults. Based on his observation, he realises that the child does not converse as much as their peers do and does not communicate as expected from a three-year-old despite the various interactive play activities provided. As this concerns play activities relevant to communication, John, together with his colleagues, reflects on the different communication opportunities provided and recalls his observations of the child's experiences with those opportunities to address the situation.

John remembers the following:

- During free play, the child proceeds with playing with toy animals first among other play activities and spends the bulk of the time there.
- The child's parents shared that the child brings with them a rubber duck during bath time.

With those realisations, John discovers that one way to address the child's communication development is to engage the child in conversations and questions about animals, such as how certain animals move and the sounds they make. Additionally, he plans to incorporate more group time that incorporates animals in the activity, such as animal puppet shows and rhymes about animals that the child can sing together with their peers.

### 3.4 Identify Role of the Educator in Children's Play and Learning Through Reflection of Own Pedagogical Practices

In the previous subchapters, you focused more on looking into children's play experiences and the various learning opportunities provided for them when reviewing and evaluating play opportunities. However, you need to keep in mind that looking into yourself — an early childhood educator — is just as important as you are responsible for facilitating various development and learning opportunities that children need to experience.

Looking into yourself means that you need to recall your role in children's play and to learn through your personal reflection of your own pedagogical practices. The table below shows the different pedagogical practices and their corresponding descriptions, which are based on the EYLF.

Pedagogical practices	Description
Adopting holistic approaches	Educators pay attention to children's physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing as well as cognitive aspects of learning.
Being responsive to children	Educators value and build on children's strengths, abilities and interests, including their skills, knowledge, ideas and expertise.
Planning and implementing learning through play	Educators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Engage in sustained shared conversations with children to extend their thinking</li><li>▪ Provide a balance between child led, child initiated and educator supported learning</li><li>▪ Create learning environments that encourage children to explore, solve problems, create and construct</li><li>▪ Interact with babies and children to build attachment through routines and play experiences</li><li>▪ Recognise and respond to spontaneous teachable moments</li></ul>
Intentional teaching	Educators: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Use strategies such as modelling and demonstrating, open questioning, speculating, explaining, engaging in shared thinking and problem solving</li><li>▪ Move flexibly in and out of different roles and draw on different strategies as the context changes</li></ul>

Pedagogical practices	Description
Creating physical and social learning environments that have a positive impact on children's learning	Educators set up environments that are responsive to the interests and abilities of each child and invite conversations between children, early childhood educators, families and the broader community.
Valuing the cultural and social contexts of children and their families	Educators respect multiple cultural ways of knowing, seeing, and living, celebrate the benefits of diversity and understand and honour differences.
Providing for continuity in experiences and enabling children to have successful transition	<p>Educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build on children's prior and current experiences to help them feel secure, confident and connected to familiar people, places, events and understandings</li> <li>▪ Assist children to understand the traditions, routines and practices of the settings to which they are moving and to feel comfortable with the process of change</li> </ul>
Assessing and monitoring children's learning to inform provision and to support children in achieving learning outcomes	<p>Educators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gather and analyse information and evidence about what children know, can do and understand</li> <li>▪ Use a variety of strategies to collect, document, organise, synthesise and interpret the information that they gather to assess children's learning</li> <li>▪ Search for appropriate ways to collect rich and meaningful information that depicts children's learning in context, describes their progress and identifies their strengths, skills and understandings</li> </ul>

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As mentioned, the table above contains pedagogical practices according to the EYLF. The pedagogical practices discussed will help you in your personal reflection of your own pedagogical practices for you to recall and identify your role as an early childhood educator.



In doing so, you may ask yourself questions such as (but not limited to) the following:

- Have I effectively applied the EYLF pedagogical practices?
- Have I set up experiences and environments that help children to achieve the learning outcomes?
- Have I considered children's interests, needs, and abilities?
- Have I considered the perspectives and expectations of children's families in my own practice?
- Have I incorporated inclusive and culturally appropriate experiences?
- Am I free of any biases that may affect how I approach children's learning?

If you answer yes to all those questions, it means that you have been outstanding in performing your roles and responsibilities as an early childhood educator. On the other hand, if you answered no to one or more than one of those questions, it gives you an idea of the areas that you should improve on and treat with priority. You are reminded that it is your role to address issues related to your own practices to ensure that children are provided with the best learning environment and experience. However, regardless of whether you answered yes or no, you need to constantly reflect on your own pedagogical practices to become aware of any mistakes or lapses and to make sure that you are on track in carrying out your roles and responsibilities as an early childhood educator.







### Checkpoint! Let's Review

1. Holistic evaluation means looking into children's overall wellbeing (including physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing, and cognitive aspects of learning) during the assessment of play and learning opportunities.
2. To identify learning and development outcomes achieved by children, you need to refer to prior observation and other documentation such as children's work, photographs and video recordings of children playing and information from children's families.
3. Apart from looking into children's play experiences and the various learning opportunities provided for them, you need to keep in mind that looking into yourself — an early childhood educator — is just as important as you are responsible for facilitating various development and learning opportunities that children need to experience.



### Learning Activity for Chapter 3

Well done completing this chapter. You may now proceed to your **Learning Activity Booklet** (provided along with this Learner Guide) and complete the learning activities associated with this chapter.

Please coordinate with your trainer/training organisation for additional instructions and guidance in completing these practical activities.

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