

Learning and Development

Children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates and all areas of learning and development are equally important and inter-connected. Research has led to a much greater understanding of the importance of 'how' children learn rather than merely 'what' they are learning. For early years children, particularly those under the age of three, it is therefore important to include the characteristics of effective learning alongside the prime (and later specific) areas of learning. This will allow practitioners to support children through this important stage of learning and develop the foundations for a 'lifelong love of learning'.

Two-year-old children's play should be valued as it reflects their wide ranging and varied interests and preoccupations. Practitioners will need to be aware that two-year-old children may use objects in unconventional ways. For example, jigsaw pieces may be stacked, posted, or transported rather than slotted together as expected.

Does your environment (and the practitioners within it) support the uniqueness of two-year-old children and their fondness for 'relocating' equipment and resources?



Two-year-old children truly believe that anything is possible. Often though their knowledge and skill levels mean some things are not possible – this can cause frustration.

Do you offer a range of natural and open-ended resources and experiences? When was the last time you 'pretended' with a child or used an object for something other than its intended purpose?

A balance of child initiated and adult supported activities are crucial for two-year-old children.

How do you ensure a balance of child initiated and adult supported activities and experiences?



Planned activities should be informed by children's interests, next steps and individual needs – children are more likely to engage and learn if the activity is meaningful to them.



During planned activities are you flexible in your approach and allow children to take the lead?

Children need opportunities for physical and mental challenge.

How do you ensure physical and mental challenge in your provision?

Try holding back from intervening in children's exploration and learning – how does this affect their levels of persistence and the way they interact with their peers?



A variety of observational methods should be used to gather information on each child.



Which observational methods do you use to effectively capture the 'two-year-old voice'? Does it capture non-verbal communication?

Children of two are beginning to realise that despite really wanting something, they can't always have it! This is a steep learning curve and requires sensitive support from understanding practitioners.

How do you support children's understanding of this? Do all practitioners use appropriate language when explaining to children why they can't always have what they want?