



Our Learning Adventures

Fun ideas for parents/carers in Walsall to support their children's early learning and development.



Babies and young children can absorb so much learning, they are like a sponge and take in everything around them. Try to use every day routines as a learning experience for them.

Daily face to face chatting with your baby and toddler will help to link neurons in their brain. Talk about the details of things that you are seeing and hearing. What does it feel like? Does it have a smell/taste?

Don't speak too quickly, give them time to absorb what you are saying and respond by talking or using early language sounds.

This booklet explores a different area of early child development each week and outlines what children can learn from each activity and provides some ideas for you to use at home. There are also links to online platforms and sites, please be curious and visit them to see what interests you and your child.

Have you ever wondered if your child's development is on track?

Then download the "What to Expect and When" document, which can be found at: www.foundationyears.org.uk.



Communication

- Face your baby when talking to them, copy their sounds
- Name what the child points to/asks for
- Speak clearly and not too quickly
- Re-inforce words they say “yes, it’s a ball”
- Limit dummy time to naps and sleeping
- Introduce new words every day
- Have back and forth conversations with your child. Give them time to respond
- Talk to your child about what they see when you are out and about “look at the bird”
- Extend what they say “yes, a car, a big red car”

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To spend time in a face-to-face activity.	With babies, copy their expressions. If they poke their tongue out, do it back to them or make raspberry sounds, or popping sounds.	Look in the mirror together - can you make different faces? What can we see that is the same? How do we look different?
To introduce new words to your child’s vocabulary e.g., gently, floating, transparent.	Blow bubbles with your child, talk about blowing the bubbles, showing techniques and adding new words, get excited with your child when the bubbles pop.	Sing Tiny Turtle rhyme and use the actions, talk about bubbles. Use a bubble wand/machine if you can and make a fun activity to try and catch the bubbles.
To extend child’s vocabulary and help them understand the names of things.	Create a, “What’s in the box activity”. Decorate together a small box, “hide” a couple of familiar items in the box. Build up excitement about what could be in the box. Let the child choose an item, talk about what they bring out. Extending the language, they already know, “yes” it’s a hat. It’s a woolly hat...it keeps us warm.	Regularly introduce and name 5 new objects, for older children add more adjectives to describe them. Talk about what it’s used for, how does it feel, taste and smell? Is it heavy or light? What is it made from?

Other resources and tips: www.ican.org.uk/i-cans-talking-point/parents

Listening

- Turn off background sounds
- Give your child a chance to concentrate and listen to individual sounds
- Listen to them when they are trying to talk/communicate with you
- Play games and sing songs with quiet then louder sounds
- Use puppets to talk to your child
- Use different voices when reading or telling stories
- With older children, pause with a familiar song/story to see if they know what comes next.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
For children to focus and develop their listening skills and focus on particular sounds.	Go to a park/garden and listen to the birds/ducks and copy the animal sounds. Get some household items that create different sounds, and name that sounds. Like, “jingling” keys, “clattering” saucepans, “squeaky” teddy, “stomping” boots.	Sing Old MacDonald and make the sounds of the animals together. Find a spot outdoors, lie down and close your eyes. Get children to focus on what they can hear around them.
For children to be aware of changes in music, word and rhyme.	Share a story that has different characters, put on a voice for each character, or use puppets to add a variety of voices.	Play music that has a variety of rhythms. Move around to suit the style of music. E.g., Giant steps, Fairy flutters, stomping dinosaurs, scurrying mice. Classical music works well for this activity, easily found on YouTube.
Children to listen to clear instruction, start with “stop” and “go” and add more instructions as they become familiar e.g. reverse, faster, slower.	Play with a push or pull toy (car, train or animal with wheels) and play stop and go.	Play musical statues together, move to the music and stop when the music stops. Or play Simon Says, this takes careful listening skills.

Other resources and tips: www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk





Social Skills

- Children need to feel safe and secure before they go off and explore new things/people
- Attending and taking an active part in small groups will encourage your child to explore what is on offer
- Mixing with other children that are not just family will help them negotiate social rules and boundaries
- Turn taking and sharing need to be taught
- Manners are important in social situations, these are better taught at a young age.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To make children aware of acceptable social rules.	Encourage “please” and “thank you” when child wants and is handed something.	Encourage “please” and “thank you” when child wants and is handed something.
For children to understand the basis for sharing and turn taking.	Make a simple “post-box” from a cereal box, decorate it together and “post” items taking turns, mommy’s turn then Susie’s turn.	Teach children how to share, if they have an apple/biscuit, then it’s “some for Freddie and some for Mommy, we can share it”. This will help prepare them for nursery and school life too.
To make children feel supported and valued.	Have time away from distractions like mobile phones and give attention to your child. No-one likes to feel ignored, that includes babies and children.	Ask your child to help you with small chores e.g., putting knives and forks on the table at dinner time, maybe have a reward chart, but always praise their attempts and thank them for their efforts.

Other resources and tips: Look Say Sing Play at: www.nspcc.org.uk

Alice Sharp is a truly inspiring author and educator and has developed Play Together, Learn Together and Webinars for parents. visit: www.alicesharp.co.uk/for-parents.

Independence & Self-care

- Even young children need to learn to do things for themselves, encourage them to “have a go” before you rush in to do it for them
- Encourage young children to learn to make choices for themselves
- Young children do not know the names for emotions they are feeling, they need to be supported when they are angry, frustrated, sad. We all need comfort when we feel these emotions
- Biting is always a concern for parents. Sometimes this is due to frustration, lack of communication skills or being unable to wait their turn. Close monitoring of what triggers a child to bite, can identify an opportunity to distract the child, before the incident occurs.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To encourage independence.	Let your child try to do something for themselves, feeding, getting dressed, cleaning teeth, trying the toilet/potty.	At mealtimes, try letting children pour their own drink, or milk onto cereal, small amounts in little bottles or jugs work best. This helps prepare for nursery and school too.
For children to make independent choices	Encourage your child to make small choices, apple or banana, blue socks or red.	Try a creative activity, and let the children make choices for their crafting. Paint colours, adding recycled materials like tin foil, cardboard tubes.
For children to begin to understand that expressing their feelings is acceptable.	Find a story that names emotions and use wooden spoon expression faces or puppets to talk about the emotions, encourage children to copy the expressions.	Name and talk about feelings when you and your child are upset. Use a teddy, puppet or cuddle to soothe your child and reassure it's okay to feel sad, angry, upset.

Other resources and tips:

www.walsall.gov.uk

www.healthforunder5s.org.uk





Reading

- Encourage your child to explore stories, use silly voices and expression in your voice, use actions, make stories exciting
- With younger children it's not about reading every word on the page, just make it fun
- Point out what is in the pictures, what might come next?
- Use puppets/props to help your child get involved in the story
- Join your local library for free.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To get extend children's story time and reading experiences.	Try and have a few minutes story sharing with your child every day, make it part of your bedtime routine. You don't have to read every word, just share the book.	Choose a story for some focus time. Identify a character that you can follow throughout the book. Don't be afraid to show excitement or use silly voices. Invite children to anticipate what might come next.
To read, repeat and re-tell a familiar story.	Try story time on one of the online platforms listed below or get a book and read the story at least a couple of times a week, until it becomes familiar to your child.	Introduce a story and repeat it regularly until everyone can get involved with key phrases and events e.g. We're going on a Bear Hunt or Shark in The Park.
To get families involved with a free, accessible resource.	Try sourcing your local library and see what they have on offer. See what Storytime or Rhyme Times sessions they have.	Try sourcing your local library and see what they have on offer.

Other resources and tips:

www.booktrust.org.uk/books-and-reading/have-some-fun
www.walsall.gov.uk/walsalllibraries/Walsall-libraries

Rhymes

- Rhymes are a great way to help children remember things. It also helps with introducing new words and sounds
- Action rhymes help children develop a range of skills including pre-writing, physical movement, listening and following instructions
- Using props and puppets can help children make links to favourite rhymes
- When adults get involved in having fun, the children are more likely to join them.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To link words and rhymes to a particular object.	Attend local groups that have a Rhyme Time session, they will probably use props to support the songs and actions.	Make your own version of what's in the box, decorate and old cereal/shoe box and put in some object that might link to a rhyme, or just share with your child words that rhyme with the object e.g., car, far, star.
Re-enforce words and sounds in a memorable and fun way.	Try making up rhymes that works with a part of your daily routine, like getting dressed or going shopping.	Let your child make up extra verses of a current favourite rhyme. Be silly with the words and have fun.
To extend your child's experiences of rhymes and songs.	Explore some new rhymes and songs. Share them with your child regularly, use the actions that go with the rhyme. Visit one of the online platforms in this leaflet for ideas.	Use a mix of traditional and modern nursery rhymes. Include from other cultures and languages.

Other resources and tips:

www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people/nursery-rhymes-and-songs-collection
www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/nursery-rhymes-a-to-z-index/z4ddgwx

For a list of Parent and Toddler sessions across Walsall call 01922 653383





Early Maths skills

- Children need to learn the value of numbers. We can start by counting out in every opportunity e.g. one for you, one for me...that makes two, counting as you step, laying the table, shopping. Just make it part of your everyday vocabulary
- Use mathematical language e.g. size, Mommy is bigger than Susie but Daddy is bigger than Mommy, so Daddy is the biggest
- Match things together e.g. socks, shoes. Talk about patterns that are the same or different
- Give children the opportunity to use different size containers for pouring during water, sand or rice activities.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To show similarities and differences of patterns and quantities	Pair socks, describe the colours, patterns, using pegs to pair them.	Play a game of snap or create an activity that needs patterns/shapes matching.
To encourage fine motor skills and recognising where shapes and pictures might fit together.	Show pictures and flash cards that are similar and different. Try sharing 2-or 3-piece jigsaws.	Share a jigsaw with your child and talk about the picture it makes. Give support and encouragement when trying to make the pieces fit together (some libraries have jigsaws available for loan)
Give meaning to the numbers children are hearing.	Build a tower with your child, add one more then count how many you have.	Have some number rhymes at rhyme time, encourage counting on hands as you sing along.

Other resources and tips:

www.blackcountryearlyoutcomes.co.uk/parents-carers

www.eyalliance.org.uk/family-time-tips-free-childrens-activities-try

Explore

- As children begin to grow, offer them new experiences to explore, such as, a visit to the supermarket or a walk through the park. These can become a learning opportunity when guided by an adult to point out objects and features of their environment.

Learning Objective	Home activity 0-3 years	Home activity 3-5 years
To give the child an awareness of the world around them.	Walk in the park or garden, look at bugs, leaves and flowers together, talk about colours, smells, textures.	Create a small nature tray and use a magnifying glass to look more closely at finer details and talk about what can be seen.
To extend a child's learning of what happens next.	Have a pouring and filling activity at home, using water, rice or lentils a small bowl and different sized scoops, spoons and pourers (do not leave child unattended due to choking/drowning risks).	Have a messy activity that children take part in setting up, if you are making playdough, do it with them, talk about what happens when we add...Let children mix different paint colours together. (Do this outside if you are worried about the mess).
To explore new texture, tastes and smells together to extend the child's experiences.	Go to a shop for a different piece of fruit or veg and talk about it in depth before buying, cooking and tasting together. (Ideal time to introduce lots of new words).	Do a cooking activity together, let children take time to mix, taste and smell the ingredients through the cooking or baking process. (Never leave children unattended by a hot cooker or hob).

Other resources and tips:

www.literacytrust.org.uk/resources/walk-and-talk-trail





Is your child **READY** for education and learning?

R – Read and Retell a story. Do our babies have opportunities to listen to stories and build their listening, looking and understanding skills? Do our toddlers and pre-school children experience many books exposing them to new worlds and new words? Are they encouraged to re-telling the stories, in their own words, building their speaking skills and giving them opportunities to use new words and talk in sentences? Reading together every day builds children's attachment and security.

E – Every Conversation Matters. Every time we chat to babies and children, we build their brains. Do we talk to our children and begin to have back and forth conversations when they babble and begin to use words. Do we have conversations with pre-school children to develop their thinking? Do we help children to understand their emotions by naming what they may be feeling and by helping them to calm themselves and regulate their emotions? Do we encourage our children to interact with other children and make friends?

A – A new word every day. By the age of two years old, many children will use between 20 and 50 words. By the time they are three years old, their vocabulary has built to 300 words. Children then continue to learn around 400 new words a year to build their full vocabulary by the time they leave school. Children learn words best when they experience and use them in their own life.

D – Develop Independent Skills. Children need time, patience and many opportunities to develop their independence skills. This includes building up to feeding and dressing themselves, being toilet trained and having good personal hygiene, only using their dummy for comfort or sleep and making choices given by an adult. Do we build our children's resilience and determination by showing them what to do, rather than do it for them and giving them praise, encouragement and some support to overcome initial hurdles?

Y – Your child needs you. Adults are the child best teacher. Children get ideas for play from other children but they build secure bonds, feel safe, learn language and develop understanding from caring, present adults, who play, explore and create experiences for them to enjoy. Are our children presented with fun, ambitious learning and play opportunities? Do we enable our children to explore and discover? Can they imagine and create in their play and learning?



**For information about Early Years Funding
for Childcare costs, please visit:**

www.childcarechoices.gov.uk
or e-mail walsallfis@walsall.gov.uk

**For further information about activities or
services listed in this booklet, please contact:**

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