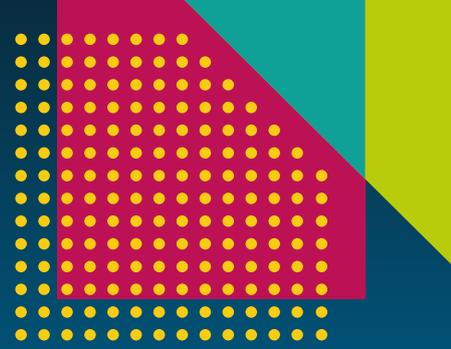


Helping children and young people learn



What you can do in the early years

Children are learning and growing from the time they are born. Families play an important role in their child's learning.

A parent's impact

Early interactions make a big difference to your child's lifelong learning. Parents play the most important role as a child's first teacher in these early years.

The hustle and bustle of normal family life provides many opportunities for children to learn about healthy eating, being active, sharing affection and having fun together. Parents help their child learn when they encourage their child to believe in themselves and enjoy new experiences together.

Tip 1: Play, talk and learn together

Tip 2: Use play and fun ways of getting children involved

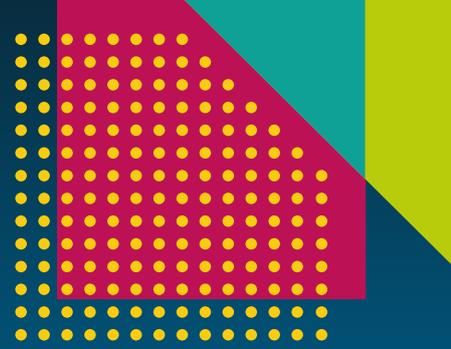
Tip 3: Talk! Talk! Talk!

Tip 4: Help your child develop social skills

Tip 5: Help your child develop thinking and problem solving skills



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Tip 1: Play, talk and learn together

Involve your child in the everyday activities of family life, providing a broad range of opportunities for learning. Cooking, cleaning, tidying, measuring, fixing, gardening – all these activities are great fun for young children and will help them feel part of the family and learn about life.

Here are some tips and ideas about the little things families can do in their daily routines to help a child's learning.

Play

Play with your child and encourage your child to play and explore.

Get down and dirty in the sandpit or get creative with some art or craft projects. This is fun at any age!

Talk

Talk with and listen to your child as part of your normal everyday activities.

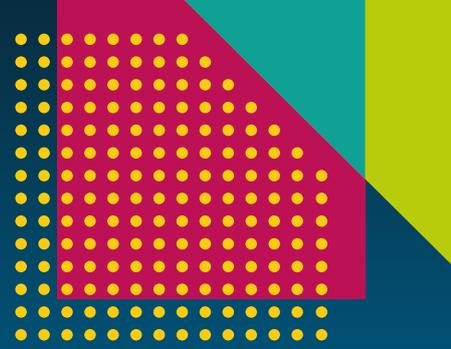
Talk about what you are doing, what will happen that day, and the world around you. Ask for their opinion and encourage them to share their ideas.

Learn

Read stories together, notice and wonder with your child every day.

Counting can be a fun activity in the car, at home or while you are doing chores or outdoor activities. Reading aloud from picture books can start from birth, and is an important bonding and settling ritual. For many families, book sharing is part of their bedtime rituals.





Tip 2: Use play and fun ways of getting children involved

Play with language

Try name games, singing nursery rhymes, memorising games, shopping games, counting games – the list is endless and you're building your child's language skills by the minute.

Use things in the home to explore touch, taste, and smell and talk about colour, texture, and shape

Talk about how an orange is round, how it smells, how it feels outside and inside its peel, how it can be cut into pieces, how it tastes. Use measuring cups in a sink of water or the bath, or let your child bang and crash with the pots and pans.

Get creative

Try stringing beads, playing with clay or play dough, cutting with scissors and drawing with crayons to support children to develop the skills they need for holding pencils and writing.

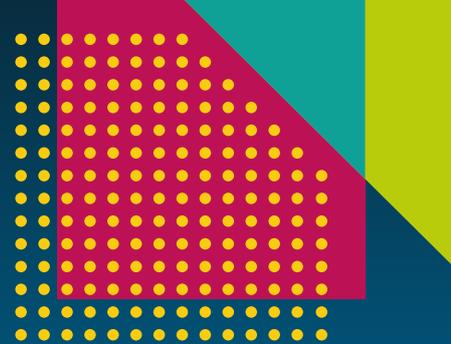
Play ball games, run, jump, skip, and hop

Go outside where children have room to run, can explore and climb safely, and can play with a variety of things like water, sand, sticks and stones.

Make-believe play

You can make up stories pretending to be different people or characters, hold tea parties, play dress ups and make puppet shows for fun.

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Tip 3: Talk! Talk! Talk!

Talk about everyday things as you do them at home

Talk about sorting the washing, setting the dinner table, writing the shopping list. Point out things you see when in the car, shopping or walking in the park. Talk about street signs, patterns, numbers on houses or cars, plants and animals. Play 'I Spy' together or other car games.

It doesn't matter if children don't talk back at first, eventually they will!

You can also start to ask questions like 'which sock goes with this one?' and 'how many plates do we need on the table?' Older children can then get involved in activities like sorting the washing, or writing and reading the shopping list.

Tip 4: Help your child develop social skills

You can help your child to develop social skills by providing opportunities to be around others and encouraging them to try new things.

Talk about how to act and what is expected

Talk to children about things they need to learn, ways they should act in different circumstances and what is expected of them when they are at home or outside of home (eg at the shops, at school). Some children like to know a plan for the day or advance warning of when they will have to leave or stop what they are doing.

Help build independence, responsibility and skills for teamwork

Involve them in shared family activities like preparing meals, tidying up, vacuuming or unpacking the shopping.

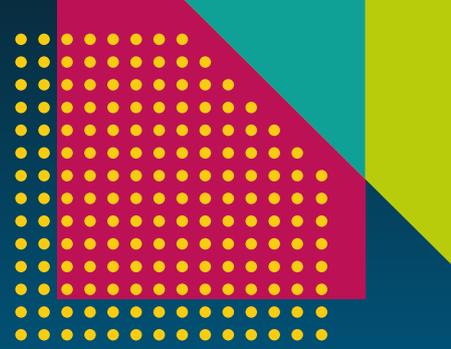
Play team games

These encourage turn-taking, understanding rules, finding solutions to problems and resolving arguments without fighting.

Give encouragement

You could say "I really like the way you..." and "I could see you tried your best..."





Tip 5: Help your child develop thinking and problem solving skills

Talk about everyday things at home and their colour, shape and size

Match and label items eg a breakfast cereal in a bowl - the bowl is round, is red, is heavy, is light etc.

Provide problem solving toys

Particular toys and games can give children the opportunity to solve problems, such as constructing a block tower, doing a puzzle, matching shapes and pictures, doing jigsaws, and making a pattern with beads.

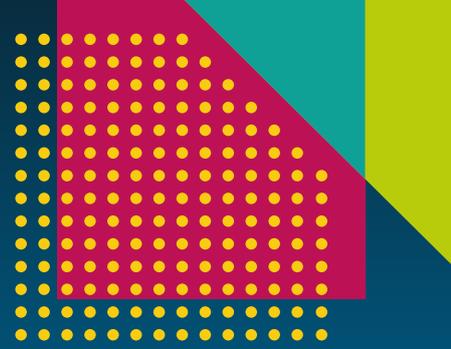
Talk about ideas and opinions

Provide children with choices to develop their confidence to make decisions themselves about what to wear in different weather and for different types of outings.

Help children solve problems themselves

When something happens or goes wrong, ask them 'what could we do next time?' and give them time to think about it.

Helping children and young people learn



Where can I find more information?

Great Start – South Australian ideas and tips for helping children learn

www.greatstart.sa.edu.au

Dads Read – a South Australian website for fathers

www.dadsread.org.au

Learning Potential – a smart phone app developed by the Australian Government

www.learningpotential.gov.au

Raising children – ideas for learning and play with primary school-aged children

www.raisingchildren.net.au/play_learning/school_age_play_learning.html

Starting Blocks – an Australian website for learning about child care options and what you can do at home

www.startingblocks.gov.au/at-home

Early Years Learning framework - information about what your child will learn in early years education settings

www.education.gov.au/early-years-learning-framework

About this information

These fact sheets were adapted from a series developed by the ACT Education and Training Directorate in partnership with the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and representatives of ACT independent, and Catholic schools and parent organisations. The material in the fact sheets is Creative Commons and is based on international research and consultation with teachers and parents.

