



The Areas of learning and development – Prime Areas and Specific Areas

Why is learning and development key?

Learning and development shape the activities and experiences that childcare providers offer children under the age of 5. The EYFS states that the educational program offered must involve activities and experiences that cover 7 significant and inter-connected areas of learning and development.

The four guiding principles:

There are four guiding principles in the EYFS. These principles are used when implementing the above 7 learning and development areas at the nursery.

They are:

1. That every child is unique.
2. That every child can learn to be strong and independent through positive relationships.
3. That children learn and develop best in enabling environments.
4. That children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates.

The 7 different areas of learning and development in the EYFS

The seven areas of learning and development are grouped into two categories – prime areas and specific areas. The prime areas are important because they lay the foundations for children's success in all other areas of learning and of life.

There are three prime areas of learning and development.

The Three (3) Prime Areas of Learning and Development:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development**
This area helps to shape children's social skills and develops respect and an understanding of their different feelings.
- **Physical Development**
We all know that young children often love to be active, but they also need to understand that continued physical activity as well as healthy food choices are important, and why.
- **Communication and Language**
Providing an environment for young children to express themselves and speak and listen in a range of situations allows them to develop their language and communication skills.

The specific areas provide the range of experiences and opportunities for children to broaden their knowledge and skills:

The Four (4) Specific Areas of Learning and Development:

- **Literacy**
It's important for children to discover phonemic awareness – the ability to hear and identify different words and sounds, and also to start reading and writing.
- **Mathematics**
Children need to be guided in developing skills with numbers and calculations, as well as being able to describe shapes, spaces, and measures.
- **Understanding the World**
This involves children making sense of things by observing and exploring everything from the places they spend time to the technology and other things that they use.



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Partnership With Our Children

- **Expressive Arts and Design**

Activities like drawing, playing with paint, instruments or technology all give children the chance to express themselves and learn new things.

Why the prime areas are 'prime'

The prime areas are fundamental to children's successful learning in the specific areas. The specific areas cannot be encountered in isolation from communication and language or personal, social, emotional and physical development since children always experience the world through communication and physical and sensory involvement. A strong foundation in the prime areas is essential as evidence shows that, if it is not securely in place by age five, it holds children back in other areas of learning and development. The areas are planned so they are appropriate to an individual child's level of development and progress.

Practitioners are encouraged to take a flexible approach, responding to each child as an individual learner. There is nothing in the framework that prevents a practitioner from introducing aspects from the specific areas of learning and development for an individual child earlier than they might for other children, if they judge that to be appropriate.

How the prime areas relate to one another

The relationship between the three prime areas of learning and development were set out by Clare Tickell in her review of the EYFS framework in 2011.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development supports:

- **Physical Development** – a child who feels secure and safe is confident to expand the boundaries of exploration and is motivated to reach, move and test physical capacities.
- **Communication and Language** within relationships that establish turn-taking, joint activity, a desire to communicate and understanding of shared meanings of words.

Physical Development supports:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – increasing physical control provides experience of the self as an active agent in the environment, promoting growth in confidence and awareness of control.
- **Communication and Language** – a child who can effectively use the large movements, gestures and fine movements involved in speech is able to convey messages to others.

Communication and Language supports:

- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – a child who can communicate feelings, needs and ideas develops a strong sense of self and is increasingly able to relate to others in rewarding and appropriate ways.
- **Physical Development** through describing actions (which increases conscious control) and through talk about health and the factors which influence it.