Early Years

Supporting Smooth Transitions | Learning at Home

Learning at Home Parents/Carers Guidance

Everything you do with your child can help them to be strong confident, independent learners who are ready to start school.

These cards and activity ideas will help you as parents and carers to prepare your child for their next step into school. Time spent doing things together at home and seizing learning opportunities will really help your child find out new things and develop skills that will help learning at school.

One side of each card will provide you with ideas of activities you could try in different places at home or out and about. The other side offers **Top Tips** to encourage further play and learning.

Talking to your child shows you're interested in them and care about them. The more they get the chance to speak, the more they'll learn.

Small-Talk.org.uk

A quick guide to the top tip icons

Talking point
All of the suggested activities can be enhanced by parents/carers talking to their child. Each card will have a suggested talking point as a top tip.

Keep safe!
Ensure that children are accompanied when using any potentially dangerous equipment such as scissors or knives, when in engaging in risky play such as climbing, when near water or when playing with objects that pose a choking or suffocation risk.

Thinking time
Children share their ideas

Promoting independence
Children do things for themselves

Following instructions
Children listen and do

Recognising me
Children know what makes them unique

Taking turns
Children work together

Getting moving
Children use their bodies

Investigating
Children find out

Relaxing
Children learn to rest

Being creative
Children use their imagination

Reading time
Children share stories and information

Writing time
Children record ideas

Starting maths
Children problem solve

Using technology
Children use technology for a purpose

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Where can we go?

Let's go on a journey! We could go on a bus or a train together somewhere new or take a walk around where we live.

- We can plan our journey by looking at maps and talking about what we might see on our way. I find it reassuring knowing what we will do when we get there, so please give me give me as much information as you can.
- Do we need to take anything with us? Let's pack a bag together. We can think about what the weather is like and what food and drinks to take with us.
- Stop, look and listen. We can practise being safe near roads and when travelling in vehicles. Games like 'Eye Spy' are fun to play as we travel to new and familiar places.
- What songs do we know about vehicles? The wheels on the bus, zoom zoom zoom, twinkle twinkle chocolate bar.
- We could take some photos of our journey and when we get home talk about all the things we have seen together.

TOP TIPS: Where can we go?

Talking point
Introduce possibilities to your child – use lots of open-ended questions such as what might we see? Where might we find? Who might live there?

Promoting independence
Support your child to collect the items you need for your journey and pack their bag.

Getting creative
Talk to your child about their creations and play alongside talking about how you are making your creation.

Getting moving
When you are out and about, find opportunities for your child to participate in vigorous movement such as running, jumping or rolling.

Starting maths
Talk to your child about the position, size and shape of things they see and use outside.

Keeping safe!
Talk about the possible dangers when outside and ways in which your child can keep safe, such as washing hands and sun safety.

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Mini Gardens

Being outside in nature is important for my wellbeing and health. When you play alongside me, I can share my creativity with you and we can learn together.

- Using containers from the recycling we have left over, we can build a mini garden. We can fill it with items that we can collect sticks, pebbles, leaves, conkers and soil.
- Help me to arrange my garden in any way I choose. I could build homes for people or animals that live there, or I could build a pathway for my vehicles, I might like to build a picnic area.
- We could add some seeds or bulbs to try and grow new plants. You can help me by talking about what things plants needs to grow such as water and light.
- As I play with my garden talk to me and ask questions about who might visit the garden.

TOP TIPS: Mini gardens

Talking point
Ask me why I am choosing different resources for my garden? Is it because I can build with sticks, or maybe I'm using pebbles to build a pond?

Investigating
Children are curious and enjoy finding out how things work. Exploring different materials will help them work out what is best to use and why other materials might not work so well.

Thinking time
Allow children to give their opinions and encourage them to explain why they have chosen particular resources.

Getting creative
Help me to decide which resources to use. Talk to me about what is happening in the garden and create stories with me..

Getting moving
Playing with small items and manipulating them can really help my fine motor skills which later on supports my writing.

Reading time
Visit the library and find some non-fiction books about nature – talk about some of the things you have seen together or plan some more adventures to look for things together.

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Let's Lunch

When I start school, I will need to be able to feed myself at snack and lunch time. The more I practise this at home, the better I will be.

- We could prepare a picnic together. This can be an indoor or outdoor picnic, or even a pretend picnic with my teddies.
- Let's plan what we would like to eat and make some healthy choices together. We could write a list and check what we have in our cupboards or visit the shop to buy what we need.
- Encourage me to help prepare the food. Spreading, chopping and peeling are all skills I will need to learn to help me at school.
- I will need to clear up after myself when I am at school, so let me practise this too. Show me how to put things in the bin when finished or drawer after being cleaned.
- Perhaps we could write some invitations to our family, friends or teddies to invite them to our picnic.

TOP TIPS: Let's lunch

Talking point
If we visit the shops to purchase some of the items on our list, perhaps we could try a new fruit or vegetable that isn't familiar to me. Talk about what it might taste like, how it feels and smells.

Taking turns
Picnics are great opportunities to take turns – offering our friends food and taking turns to pour drinks.

Following instructions
When your child helps you prepare the picnic, give them short simple instructions they can follow. You may even like to incorporate some baking where you can follow a recipe together.

Starting maths
Instructions are a great opportunity to introduce lots of mathematical vocabulary such as first, now, next, etc. During your picnic encourage children to sort, match and compare – making sure everyone has a plate and cup each – do we have enough? Compare the sizes and shapes of different items, for example all the cookies may be the same size but the strawberries may be different.

Keeping safe!
Encourage children to use knives and other tools safely and under your supervision.

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It's good to talk

One of the most useful things you can do to get me ready for school is make sure I am comfortable talking to unfamiliar people.

- Helping me to interact with different staff members when we go to the local shops or library. I could ask how much something is, or where to find something we are looking for.
- Encourage me to order my own food in a café. Talk to me about what I would like from the menu so I know what to ask for. I could help you pay at the end too.
- We could attend open days at the local fire station where I can talk to the firefighters about the job they do. We may come across Police Community Support Officers when we are out and about, encourage me to talk to them about the work they do, perhaps they might even show me their walkie talkie or inside their vehicle.

TOP TIPS: It's good to talk

Talking point
Introduce your child to the vocabulary they will need such as 'please' and 'thank you' when they ask for things.

Promoting independence
Encourage your child to have conversations with a range of different people to build their confidence.

Recognising me
Help me to feel proud when I have successfully completed a task by myself.

Reading time
Borrow books from the library about different families, people and communities to prepare your child for meeting new people.

Keeping safe!
Talk to me about stranger danger and when it is safe to talk to strangers. Remind me about what to do if I was lost and who I would find to help me.

Using technology
Call a family member or friend to talk about their day.

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Help me create

Connecting and fastening things together is a fascinating activity for children and really supports my fine motor skills, which later on helps me with writing. I might need you to show me or help me, but most importantly talk to me and describe what we are doing.

- Let's build tracks or bridges using train track, masking tape, empty boxes, Lego or bricks and make long unplanned routes across the room for our cars, trains or people.
- We could make a sock puppet with buttons for eyes. We could then put on a show together.
- Threading or sewing using ribbon, laces, material or wool through an old bicycle wheel, cooling rack, a fence or some card with holes punched in it is really fun!
- Maybe we could explore magnets together, investigating what they stick to and what they repel. Show me how a magnet can make things move, for example, using a magnet under a piece of paper to move paperclips on top.

TOP TIPS: help me create

Talking point
Always talk to me about what we're doing and the connections we have made. Modelling language to your child increases their vocabulary and helps them to make sense of the world around them.

Getting creative
Allow your child to lead the play, ask them questions like 'I wonder what might happen if?' or 'that's interesting, tell me why you have...'

Thinking time
Highlight problems or issues for your child to solve like 'How can we make the track go around the chair?' Encourage them to think of their own ideas rather than provide them with the answer straight away.

Starting maths
Talk to your child about the position, size and shape of things they are connecting.

Relaxing
Children can find creative tasks relaxing as it allows them to focus on their hobby. You could add background music to enhance the experience.

Keeping safe!
Show your child how to use tools safely and never leave them unattended with tools.

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Ready for school!

Getting ready for school is an exciting time, but can make me feeling uneasy sometimes.

- Find out what I find tricky and give me lots of praise and encouragement to help me overcome it.
- We could play 'schools' together to build my confidence. I could dress up in my new uniform and shoes, this will help me become independent in dressing. We could make a register and check everyone is here. We could create our own snack time pouring own drinks and cutting and peeling our own fruit. Perhaps I could tell you my favourite story, I don't need to read all the words, but you could help me remember some of the repeated words and phrases. These are some of the things that I will be doing at school.
- Encourage me use the toilet and wash my hands independently. It will help me to practise this when we are out and about because toilets look different everywhere.

TOP TIPS: Ready for school

Talking point
Talk about the different activity zones in your child's classroom – the sand tray, the role play, the outdoor area and which areas they like to choose to play in the most.

Promoting independence
Encourage your child to dress and undress and use the toilet independently.

Recognising me
Spend time showing your child where to find their names on their belongings to help them locate them with greater independence.

Reading time
Try to read everyday with your child and talk about their favourite stories.

Following instructions
Think about the key things your child needs to do to get ready in the morning. Perhaps make a board with pictures that they can use to help them remember the instructions they need to follow.

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Brilliant board games

Board games and puzzles are a great way to encourage lots of skills that I need. They're also a great way for the whole family to get involved and have fun together. Help me to develop my language skills, maths skills and social skills by hosting a family board games night, perhaps this could be a regular thing!

- Lots of libraries lend puzzles and games or you can even make your own! Snakes and Ladders or Hopscotch can be drawn outside with chalk. Both these games help with my awareness of numbers.
- Playing card games together such as Snap or matching games can really help my awareness of numbers. This also helps with my turn taking skills.
- More homemade games we could try: Using homemade playdough and a timer to make an object that everyone has to guess or playing team games outside such as carrying containers of water from one end of the garden to the other without spilling them, we could even try a real egg and spoon race!
- Sitting together as a family and taking turns in conversation, celebrating successes, and managing feelings supports my emotional development.

TOP TIPS: Brilliant board games

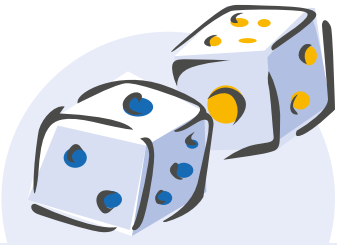
Talking point
Playing games together promote talking opportunities and opportunities to recall previous family events.

Starting maths
Play games that encourage children to count a number of objects or recognise shapes and size.

Following instructions
Supporting children to follow instructions helps with their listening and understanding.

Recognising me
Help your child celebrate both theirs and other's achievements.

Writing time
Encourage your child to help you write instructions for homemade games or to keep score as you play together.



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Wonderful water play

Playing in or with water is a relaxing activity and can be calming for me.

- Hertfordshire has some amazing free splash parks where I can run, jump and delight in water play. Keep me safe in the sun regularly applying suncream.
- Water play in a sink, washing up bowl or paddling pool allows me to explore what happens to water when I pour, splash, stir and fill. Provide me with lots of containers and utensils – empty plastic bottles, yoghurt pots, spoons, sieves, whisks and anything else you can find.
- We could add food colouring or soap to the water and see what happens – can we make bubbles by whisking and stirring.
- We could make potions or perfume using petals, grass, and herbs in empty plastic bottles with water.

TOP TIPS: Wonderful water play

Talking point
Talk to your child about what they are doing and introduce lots of new words.

Starting maths
Use lots of words related to capacity such as full, empty, more, less, etc.

Investigating
Ask questions such as “how many spoonful’s of water does it take to fill the yoghurt pot?” or “How can we get the water from the bowl into the cup?”. Provide a range of different sized containers to explore.

Relaxing
Remind children that water is important for health such as drinking and washing. Create a calm space for children when they take a bath or shower.

Keep safe!
Always watch children when playing with water and do not leave them unattended near water play.

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