

Tips for creating a stimulating home learning environment (0-6 years)

What is a stimulating home learning environment?

A stimulating environment helps children learn and develop. You can provide this for your child at home by creating lots of different experiences for her through play, reading, electronic media, and everyday experiences and routines. She also needs lots of chances to practise what she's learning.

Why is your child's environment important?

Learning happens everywhere and all the time for young children. Your child's experiences in these early years lay the foundation for her learning in later years.

How your child learns

Your child learns best by actively engaging with her environment. This includes:

- observing things – for example, watching your face and what you do, and listening to what you say.
- listening to sounds and music, making sounds and singing.
- exploring and experimenting – for example, your baby might put things in her mouth or shake them. When your older child experiments with a range of materials like water or sand, it helps her learn about problem-solving in situations where there are no 'right' answers.
- asking questions like 'But why?' or 'What makes the wind?'
- doing things that stimulate all her senses – touch, taste, smell, vision and hearing.

Your child also learns by being involved in her learning. This could be as simple as a toddler choosing a toy to play with or a book to read. As your child gets older, she will enjoy taking more responsibility for her learning, and getting more involved in making decisions about learning and organising activities.

And babies and children learn best when they have warm, engaged and responsive relationships with their main carers.

What your child is learning

Through her interactions with you and your family, your child learns:

- about her own needs, thoughts, feelings, likes and dislikes.
- about getting on with other children and grown-ups.

- about language, written and spoken communication, and taking turns and listening in conversations.
- early numeracy skills like counting and measurement – for example when you count your baby’s toes, or when your older child helps you count eggs, weigh butter and measure milk when you make a cake together.
- about healthy eating and physical activity – for example, when your child sees you choose an apple instead of a snack bar, or when you go for a walk rather than watching TV.
- early literacy, through reading, storytelling and playing simple sound and letter games.
- early handwriting skills – for example, when you encourage your toddler to scribble and draw, or when your older child writes her name on a birthday card for her grandmother.

Tips to create a stimulating home learning environment

Reading with your child is a powerful way to build her literacy skills. Try these ideas:

- Set up a regular time each day to read with your child. Keep reading to your child even after she can read for herself.
- As soon as she is able, encourage your child to choose her own book.
- Encourage your child to participate – for example, let her hold the book, and comment on what she’s pointing to or looking at. Ask questions like ‘Why do you think she did that?’
- Point out words on everyday objects, for example food packets, signs, junk mail, toys and clothing. Ask your toddler if she can find the first letter of her name in a supermarket sign. Or ask your older child to read words.
- As well as reading each word in a book, you can encourage your child’s love of reading by talking about the pictures in books. You can also expand on the stories or make up your own.

Play allows your child to explore and learn about the world. It is also fun and does not need lots of toys. Your child’s learning benefits when you and other family members become involved in her play. You can support your child’s play by:

- making time for play.
- providing space your child can use for play.
- supplying simple materials, like dress-ups, blocks, dolls, or games.
- organising someone to play with – for example, you, or another child.
- letting her choose how and what she plays.

Television, DVDs and the internet are part of almost every family's entertainment. If your child watches these, it is best if:

- you watch with your child, so you can explain and repeat content, and prompt your child to respond in some way to the content.
- you choose programmes suitable for your child.
- you avoid programmes that contain advertisements.
- screen time is a 'sometimes' activity.
- you provide other activities that can replace these things – for example, playing outside, creative activities and looking at books.

The latest guidelines from the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) suggest that children under 18 months should avoid screen time, other than video-chatting.

Routines give your child a sense of security and stability. And when your daily activities are organised into predictable patterns, it's easier to create time to spend with your children, and talk with them. These moments build your relationship and stimulate your child's learning. Try these ideas:

- Eat dinner as a family each night, or on certain days each week.
- When your child is old enough, encourage her to help you with household chores such as cleaning, laundry and food preparation.
- Talk with your baby or toddler while you are sharing everyday routines such as bath and meal times – describe what's happening and listen to her ideas.
- Use time travelling to and from school or preschool as an opportunity to talk and listen to your older child.
- Have a regular family DVD night – remember to talk about what is happening in the movie.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

For some suggestions on rhymes, click [here](#) to download a booklet on rhymes!

Recommended Reads

- [The everything homeschooling book: all you need to create the best curriculum and learning environment for your child](#)
- [The learning brain: memory and brain development in children](#)
- [Learning without school: home education](#)
- [Busy bags kids will love: make-ahead activity kits for a happy preschooler and stress-free parent](#)
- [Rethinking school: how to take charge of your child's education](#)
- [Boost Grades and Inspire a Lifelong Love of Learning—Without Paying for a Tutor](#)

Engage your child with simple activities at home! Check out some of these things you can do together:

- [Ella Sarah Dresses for the Weather](#)