Home is where the start is
Learning at home

Young children learn by doing
Parents and caregivers are children’s first and life-long teachers
Children need to learn to relate to both men and women

Love and care
The bond between parents and children helps support and encourage learning. A loving, safe environment gives a child a great start. Parents learn about their children and children learn about their parents. The bond is valuable throughout life.

Growing your relationship
Smiling, cuddling, praising, talking to your child, sharing experiences and doing things together are all ways of encouraging learning. Right from the start make sure children know that what they do is valued. Show them that you love them. Praise early attempts at such things as dressing and feeding themselves, talking, drawing and writing.

Learning
Young children learn through touching, tasting, smelling, seeing, hearing and talking, and by sharing the beginning of their understanding of their world with adults and other children. They need time to explore, discover, test and practise what they are learning. Almost everything your child does is learned.
Playing outside

Most everyday experiences can be shared.

Children learn by doing. Here are ways to help children develop skills and understanding in areas such as mathematics, literacy, planning, problem solving and decision making.

Choose only what you think your child can do or almost do

- Use stones, sticks and leaves to make pictures and patterns with your child.
- Encourage children to draw and write with a stick in the sand.
- Talk with your child about what you can see outside and such things as why water is important and all the ways that seeds travel.
- Provide opportunities for children to play with sand and water. Sand and water can be measured, mixed, shaped and used in many pretend games.
- Provide opportunities for children to play with balls and ropes and to use planks of wood for balancing.
- Encourage children to climb, run, jump and hop.
- Provide opportunities for children to play with cubbies and cardboard boxes.
- Make up stories about the animals, insects and people you see.
- Play singing games.
Helping at meal times
- Help your child to work out how many people will be eating.
- Ask how many plates and cups will be needed and where they should be placed.
- Encourage your child to help with sharing out food and pouring drinks.
- Talk about things that go together.
- Explain why we need to eat and why we need to drink water.

Going for walks
Talk about:
- the different types of plants and animals you see;
- patterns and signs in the world around you;
- house numbers, street names, road signs, and the number of cars or people that pass by;
- safety.
Make up games like 'I spy' about what you see.

Watching television or videos
Decide with your child what television programs or videos you are going to watch together and why you are going to watch them. Afterwards talk about what they liked and did not like and why they felt that way.
Cooking
- Talk about what you are going to cook and how you will do it.
- Read recipes with your child and discuss why hands and utensils need to be clean when cooking.
- Encourage children to help to gather and measure ingredients and prepare the food.
- Talk about how mixtures change before, during and after cooking.
- Talk about flavours, colours, tastes, smells, textures and temperatures.

Split food or drink
Instead of rushing to clean it up, ask your child "What should we do?"
Allow them to solve the problem and help clean up the mess. Praise your child for their helpfulness.

Deciding what to wear
Encourage children to make decisions about clothes for hot or cold, dry or wet weather, for playing with water or going on an outing.

Shopping
- Before shopping, talk about items you will buy and why.
- Write a shopping list together.
- At the shop, let your child point out the items you need.
- At home, sort shopping items and let your child help put them away.
Stories, reading and writing

- Tell stories.
- Read with your child every day, taking turns to choose what to read.
- Let your child see you reading and writing.
- Provide paper, pencils or crayons and let your child draw and ‘have a go’ at writing. Accept your child’s efforts whatever they look like. They are learning about signs and symbols.

Most importantly

- Have fun with your child.
- Show your child that you love them.
- Show your child that you like what they do.
- Enjoy your child’s learning and enjoy learning with them.
- Talk, talk, talk!

Early Childhood Education
It’s more important than you think.

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