**The difference you can make**

**Helping children learn in the early years**

Your child learns every day and everywhere, at home, at school, and in the community.

How you support your child’s learning matters, you have a key role in shaping their values, attitudes and approaches to learning at home and at school. There are simple things you can do to help your child thrive in their learning

**Play, talk and learn together**

Include your child in every day of family life. There are many opportunities to learn. It could be when you:

* cook
* clean and tidy up
* measure or fix things
* garden.

Doing these things together lets your child learn new skills and builds their interests.

**Play**

Play with your child and encourage them to explore.

* Get dirty in the sandpit.
* Get creative with some art or craft projects.
* Look for household items that make great toys. Pots, plastic bottles and boxes can be lots of fun with a little imagination.

**Talk**

Talk with and listen to your child every day. Talk about:

* what you are doing
* what will happen that day
* the world around you.

Ask for your child’s opinion and encourage them to share their ideas.

**Learn**

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

* Counting can be fun anywhere. You could be in the car
or at home. It could be while you are doing chores or are outside.
* Read aloud from picture books. You can start from birth. It’s an important way to bond with your child and settle them.
* Share a book as part of their bedtime routine.

**Use play and fun to get your child involved**

**Play with language**

Try singing nursery rhymes. You can also try all sorts of games:

* memory
* shopping
* counting.

The list is endless and you’re building your child’s language skills every day.

**Use things in the home**

Explore touch, taste, and smell. Talk about colour, texture, and shape.

* Talk about an orange. Talk about how it feels outside
and inside its peel. Show how it can be cut into pieces. Talk about how it tastes.
* Is it round? How does it smell?
* Use measuring cups in the bath or a sink of water.
* Let your child bang and crash with the pots and pans.

**Get creative**

Get creative with your child. You can help them develop
the skills they need to hold a pencil and write. Together,
you could:

* string beads
* play with clay or playdough
* cut with scissors
* draw with crayons.

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

Go outside where your child has room to run, explore and climb safely. Your child could play with a variety of things like water, sand, sticks and stones.

**Make-believe play**

You can make up stories and pretend to be different people or characters. You could also:

* hold tea parties
* play dress-ups
* make puppet shows.

**Talk, talk, talk**

Talk every day with your child as you go about your daily routine. 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.

**Help your child develop social skills**

When you spend time with other people you help your child to develop social skills. It also helps if you encourage your child to try new things.

**Play games**

Play games with your child. You can encourage them to take turns, understand rules and find solutions.

**Give encouragement**

You could say “I really like the way you… “ and “I could see you tried your best…”.

**Help your child develop thinking and problem-solving skills**

**Talk about everyday things at home**

You can talk about colour, shape and size.

Match and label items. For example, breakfast cereal
in a bowl.

*The bowl is round.*

*The bowl is red.*

*The bowl is heavy.*

**Provide problem-solving toys**

Particular toys and games can help your child learn
to solve problems. Together, you could:

* construct a block tower
* do a puzzle or a jigsaw
* match shapes and pictures
* make a pattern with beads.

**Talk about ideas and opinions**

You can help your child feel more confident when you let them make choices. It could be something like what to wear in different weather.

**Help your child solve the problem themselves**

When something happens or goes wrong, ask your child ‘what could we do next time?’ Give them time to think about it.

**Find out more**

[Talk to your school or preschool](https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/education-and-care-locations/find-school-service) about how you can be more involved

[www.education.sa.gov.au/parentengagement](http://www.education.sa.gov.au/parentengagement) – find out what parent engagement resources are available

[www.greatstart.edu.au](http://www.greatstart.edu.au) – South Australian ideas and tips for helping children learn

[www.learningpotential.gov.au](http://www.learningpotential.gov.au) – ideas and activities to support learning from birth to Year 12

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au) - information to help parents and carers make decisions about parenting their children.

**About this information**

This information is adapted from a series made in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The ACT Education and Training Directorate developed the series in partnership with:

* the non-profit Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)
* representatives of ACT independent, and Catholic schools and parent organisations.