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# INTRODUCTION: A SPEEDY OVERVIEW OF THE EYFS FRAMEWORK

## Read this if:

- you are new to the EYFS
- you need a quick overview of the changes
- you are expecting an Ofsted inspection and need an EYFS MOT.

## What is the Early Years Foundation Stage?

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is a statutory framework for early years settings and schools with a reception class. The term 'statutory' means that it is compulsory for early years settings to follow its requirements.

It applies to settings working in England with children from 0–5 years. It has two broad aims: to ensure that children receive an early years education that gives them the skills and knowledge needed for year 1, and to ensure minimum standards of health, safety and well-being. Expectations of what children should be able to do at the end of their reception year are known as the early learning goals.

The EYFS framework is therefore divided into three clear sections:

- Learning and development requirements
- Safeguarding and welfare requirements
- Assessment.

The learning and development requirements receive the most attention as they provide the 'education' component of the framework, but the safeguarding and welfare requirements should never be overlooked. Not only do they focus on the 'care' and safety elements of working with children, but if you take a holistic view of your setting, you will see how they also can impact directly on children's learning and development. (Assessment is covered in Section Two.)



## Penny T's advice

Do not skip focusing on the safeguarding and welfare requirements. As well as affecting children's welfare, they also affect your Ofsted grading.

## Areas of learning and development

In the learning and development section of the framework, seven areas of learning and development are given. They are divided into two subsections: prime areas and specific areas. The three prime areas of development are intended to be the building blocks for the four specific areas.

The prime areas of learning and development are:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development.

The specific areas of learning and development are:

- literacy
- mathematics
- understanding the world
- expressive arts and design.

## Educational programmes

For each of the areas of learning and development, expectations of what should be covered are given in the framework section called educational programmes. It is important to get a feel for what is required for each area of learning and development, as the tendency has been for settings to focus only on the early learning goals. A good example of this is mathematics. While the assessment at the end of the reception year focuses only on number, the educational programme covers shape, space and measures.

### CHANGE ALERT!



There have been substantial changes to the content of the educational programmes.

### Penny T's advice

Do not focus on the early learning goals when planning. Ofsted will look to see that you are covering the breadth of the educational programmes given.

## Early learning goals

Over time, the number of early learning goals has been reduced. This has occurred in response to reception teachers and local authorities struggling with the burden of assessment. In this version of the EYFS framework, the early learning goals have been narrowed but also, in some areas such as mathematics, they are now very challenging. The reduction in the number of early learning goals has given rise to concerns that the overall curriculum will be narrowed and children will have fewer opportunities. The increased challenge within some of the goals has also meant that some children, especially those born in the summer months or who are relatively new to English, will be disadvantaged.

### CHANGE ALERT!



There have been significant changes to the early learning goals, so pay close attention to these.

### Penny T's advice

Unless you are working in a reception class, avoid focusing on the early learning goals. An early focus on the goals instead of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve them can backfire.

If you are working in a reception class, remember that because the early learning goals are not age-adjusted, it is likely that many summer-born children will not achieve them. This is not because they are not able, just simply not ready.

## Assessment

While early years settings are expected to carry out ongoing assessments on children, there are three points when written assessments must be carried out.

### Progress check at age two

This is a written summary of children's progress in the prime areas which is carried out once they have turned 2 years old. The aim is to ensure that children who may be showing signs of development delay are given early support.

### Reception Baseline Assessment

Separately to the assessments that relate directly to the EYFS framework, schools are now required to carry out a Reception Baseline Assessment or RBA. This assessment is designed to provide data to show the effectiveness of schools in supporting children to make progress from their starting points. The RBA takes place within the first six weeks of a child entering a reception class. While it covers early literacy, mathematics and communication and language, it does not relate directly to the areas of learning and development or the early learning goals within the EYFS framework. Further details about the RBA can be found in Annex B of the EYFS framework.

### Assessment at the end of the EYFS

An assessment of the early learning goals is carried out in the summer term of the reception year. These are based on teacher-led assessments. As well as parent(s) and/or carer(s) receiving a written summary of the assessment, results are sent to the local authority and are used for national data. There are 17 early learning goals that have to be assessed, although each one is broken down further.

## Characteristics of effective teaching and learning

The idea behind the characteristics of effective teaching and learning is to prompt practitioners to think about the way that individual children approach learning. In previous versions of the EYFS framework, the titling was different – ‘characteristics of effective learning’ was used, often abbreviated to COEL.

### CHANGE ALERT!



Note the inclusion of ‘teaching’ in this section. It is a clear prompt that the role of the adult is a major focus.

## Inspection arrangements

As this is a statutory framework, inspection arrangements have been put in place. These are carried out by Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) or, for private schools, ISI (Independent Schools Inspectorate) to ensure that settings are meeting the requirements. Ofsted monitors the work of ISI. The vast majority of inspections are carried out by Ofsted. Ofsted has two evaluations schedules: one for settings on the Early Years Register, such as childminders and day care settings, and one for schools that may have a reception class and/or nursery.



### CHANGE ALERT!



The Ofsted evaluation schedule changed in 2020. There is now less of a focus on collection of data than before.

### Penny T’s advice

Make sure you know which inspection schedule applies to your setting. Each schedule has its own criteria to guide inspectors when making judgements.

### Myth buster

Contrary to popular thought, Ofsted can only inspect the requirements of the EYFS framework. They cannot add anything although, at times, they may focus on particular aspects of the EYFS framework. A good example of this is when there was a focus on British values following the introduction of this topic into the EYFS framework.

## Development Matters

This new version of the EYFS framework has an accompanying document called ‘Development Matters’. Its aim is to support practitioners with implementing and assessing the learning and development requirements. It replaces the previous guidance to help with assessment known as ‘Early Years Outcomes’. This document had its origins in the first and popular version of ‘Development Matters’.

### CHANGE ALERT!



A new version of ‘Development Matters’ was issued by the Department for Education in 2020 to accompany this EYFS framework.



## Myth buster

It is important to understand that 'Development Matters', both the current and the previous version, as well as 'Early Learning Outcomes' are *not* part of the EYFS framework. The new 'Development Matters' is a tool that might be helpful, but it is up to you whether you choose to use it.

## Penny T's advice

- Do not use the previous version of 'Development Matters' or 'Early Years Outcomes' to assess children using the old age bandings.
- The new 'Development Matters' is a good starting point, but it should not be the only source of information for assessing development or planning activities. A group of early years organisations have produced an alternative to the new 'Development Matters' called 'Birth to 5 Matters', which is based more closely on the previous 'Development Matters'. You can find out more at: [www.birthto5matters.org.uk](http://www.birthto5matters.org.uk)
- If you are leading a team, make sure that everyone has read the EYFS framework and knows that 'Development Matters' is for guidance only.

## Safeguarding and welfare requirements

The safeguarding and welfare requirements cover everything from health and safety to staffing levels and the provision of food and drink. We look at each of the requirements in Section Four of this book. Overall, the safeguarding and welfare requirements remain the same as in the 2017 version of the EYFS framework, with two exceptions: there is now the requirement for settings to promote oral health and to prevent vaping on premises. We look at each of the requirements and how best to fulfil them in Section Four.

### CHANGE ALERT!



Promoting oral health and preventing vaping on premises are minor but important changes to the safeguarding and welfare requirements.

# Section One

## The purpose and principles of the EYFS

### Purpose of the EYFS

It is worth spending a moment looking at the stated purpose of the EYFS framework because in theory this will be translated into what is inspected. There are four stated reasons for the EYFS.

#### 1 Quality and consistency

**'The EYFS seeks to provide quality and consistency in all early years settings, so that every child makes good progress and no child gets left behind.'**

[Paragraph 3 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

This statement is interesting because there is significant emphasis on the importance of children making progress. As a setting, you should be able to show that your children are making progress.

*Key ways in which this is reflected within the EYFS*

- All settings must abide by the legal requirements of the EYFS framework regardless of size or type of setting.
- There are two mandatory summative assessments of children's progress: one at 24–36 months and another at the end of the reception year.

#### 2 A secure foundation

**'The EYFS seeks to provide a secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child, and assessing and reviewing what they have learned regularly.'**

[Paragraph 3 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

As with previous frameworks, there is a clear emphasis on the importance of working with individual children. This is picked up again in the learning and development requirements which we will look at in Section Three. It is worth noting that

you need to assess and review this regularly. For most people, this is already what they are doing, so no change here, although you might need to pinpoint progress made.

*Key ways in which this is reflected within the EYFS*

- There are two mandatory summative assessments: one at 24–36 months and another at the end of the reception year.
- A legal requirement for you to ensure that you are basing your provision and planning on children's individual needs.

#### 3 Partnership working

**'The EYFS seeks to provide partnership working between practitioners and with parents and/or carers.'**

[Paragraph 3 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

The importance of parent partnership has been well established over a number of years. This is built on in the EYFS, as we will see in the learning and development requirements as well as in the safeguarding and welfare requirements. Note also that there is an expectation that you will work closely with other settings.

*Key way in which this is reflected within the EYFS*

- A legal requirement for key persons to find ways of supporting parents to guide their children's development at home.

#### 4 Equality of opportunity

**'The EYFS seeks to provide equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.'**

[Paragraph 3 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

Again, this is a well-established principle, but it is good to see it once more clearly highlighted. This links nicely back to the second purpose, a secure foundation, which is about individual children's progress.

### *Key way in which this is reflected within the EYFS*

- A legal requirement for children's individual needs to be met.

## Overarching principles of the EYFS

While we have seen the four stated reasons for the EYFS, it is also important to look at the four guiding principles of the EYFS, which can be found in the overarching principles section of the EYFS framework (paragraph 6):

- A unique child
- Positive relationships
- Enabling environments with teaching and support from adults
- Learning and development.

These principles are meant to inform your practice in delivering both the learning and development requirements as well as the safeguarding and welfare requirements. In previous versions of the EYFS framework, the non-statutory guidance gave these principles a high profile. This is not the case in the new 'Development Matters', but I feel that they are still important to analyse. In this section, we will consider what they mean for your practice.

### CHANGE ALERT!



Note that the term 'enabling environments' now includes teaching and support from adults.

## A unique child

**'Every child is a unique child, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured.'**

[Paragraph 6 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

The principle behind this theme is easy to understand. It is about the way in which you need to support each child so that they can become confident. You will need to show that you are able to understand that each child you care for is unique

and that you are aware of and are meeting children's individual needs. There are three specific areas of your practice that are worth focusing on:

- Child development – so that you can plan effectively and recognise when children may need additional support.
- Inclusive practice – so that you can help children to develop a positive identity and create a welcoming environment.
- Developing children's sense of safety – so that they can feel safe, but also learn to manage risks.



## Child development

If you have worked with several children, you will already know that no two children are the same. Even identical twins have different interests, temperaments and ways of simply being! To work effectively with individual children, you have to know each child's characteristics, their stage of development, interests and needs. This can then be reflected in planning and working out next steps for the children.

# Section Two

## Assessment

Assessment is one area of the EYFS that many settings have struggled with over the years. I suspect that is because settings have worried about 'proving' things to Ofsted and felt the need to provide some sort of a paper trail. The good news is that assessment requirements in the revised EYFS framework are quite modest and sensible. In this section, I will walk you through the requirements of the framework and also give some pointers as to how Ofsted views assessment in its EY inspections.

### Avoid confusing observation with assessment

A good starting point when looking at assessment is to understand the difference between observation and assessment. It is interesting that both the EYFS framework and the Ofsted EY inspection handbook rarely refer to observations. Instead, the focus is all about assessment. This is because observations provide the information and assessment provides the analysis. In the past, settings were often generating masses of paper observations, but these had little effect on children's progress or meeting their needs because they were not being properly analysed.

#### Penny T's advice

Make sure that you are clear about the difference between observation and assessment. Think about your practice with children and your planning. Is it based on your analysis of children's knowledge, skills and needs, i.e. is it based on assessment?

### Understanding the purpose of assessment

When looking at building or reviewing your system for assessment, begin by focusing on why assessment is important.

The EYFS framework has a very clear rationale for assessment:

**'[It] plays an important part in helping parents, carers and practitioners to recognise children's progress, understand their needs, and to plan activities and support.'**

[Paragraph 2.1 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

Note the four key reasons why assessment needs to take place:

- To recognise progress
- To understand needs
- To plan activities
- To plan support.

Interestingly, providing evidence and data for Ofsted is *not* one of the reasons!

#### Penny T's advice

Make sure that your current or proposed system of assessment focuses on the given purposes of assessing children.

### Avoiding excessive paperwork

The EYFS framework is clear that assessment should not involve endless paperwork and take adults away from actually working with children. This is great news. While this has been clear in previous EYFS frameworks, sadly it has not always been a reality in practice.

**'When assessing whether an individual child is at the expected level of development, practitioners should draw on their knowledge of the child and their own expert professional judgement and should not be required to prove this through collection of physical evidence.'**

[Paragraph 2.2 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]



## Ready for an EY inspection?

Interestingly, Ofsted has shifted its focus from examining data and records of children and is now interested in assessment only in relation to how it informs planning and enables children to make progress. Your assessment and how it impacts on the types of activities and support that children receive will be a focus during inspection. It is worth looking at the 'good' grading descriptor within the quality of education judgement:

**'Practitioners and leaders use assessment well to check what children know and can do to inform teaching. This includes planning suitably challenging activities and responding to specific needs. Leaders understand the limitations of assessment and avoid unnecessary burdens for staff or children.'**

[Paragraph 179 Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision]

Ofsted also takes a very dim view of assessment when it serves no particular purpose. It is worth noting this 'inadequate' grading descriptor within the quality of education judgement:

**'Assessment is overly burdensome. It is unhelpful in determining what children know, understand and can do.'**

[Paragraph 179 Early years inspection handbook for Ofsted registered provision]

## Penny T's advice

Look at how much time your assessment process is taking. Is this time preventing you or your staff from actually working with children?

Consider whether the recorded conclusions of assessments are actually followed up in terms of practice with children, for example, is a child who has been recognised as having a language delay actually getting more time interacting with an adult?

## Types of assessment

There are two broad types of assessment – formative and summative. Formative assessment is ongoing and is usually day-to-day in its nature. It may often not result in anything being recorded. Summative assessment is, in effect, a summing up of children's current learning and development. Both types of assessment are useful and are required within the EYFS framework.

### Formative assessment

The EYFS framework recognises the importance of formative assessment:

**'Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves practitioners knowing children's level of achievement and interests, and then shaping teaching and learning experiences for each child reflecting that knowledge. In their interactions with children, practitioners should respond to their own day-to-day observations about children's progress and observations that parents and carers share.'**

[Paragraph 2.1 Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework]

As you can see from this, formative assessment relates to the observations that we make and our analysis of them helps us to decide which resources to put out, how to adapt an activity to meet a child's needs and even how best to interact with a child. Interestingly, most of the formative assessment that we carry out will not need to be recorded.



## Formative assessment is actually a thought process

Very little of what we observe children do on a daily basis needs to be recorded in writing. Ofsted and the EYFS framework have made that perfectly clear. There are some exceptions when we may want to note things down, however. We will look at these exceptions later in this section.

Instead, formative assessment is a thought process as much as anything. Below are two examples of formative assessment in practice. As you read the examples, think about the four reasons for assessment:

- To recognise progress
- To understand needs
- To plan activities
- To plan support.

## Examples of formative assessment in practice

### Example 1

Hans is 3½ years old and is playing a board game at the table. His childminder notices that while he is enjoying the game, he is finding it hard to sit still. The childminder makes a note to look for a lower table so that his feet can be on the ground when sitting. The childminder encourages him to try standing for now. The childminder notices that he sometimes needs a little prompting to wait for his turn but that he has made good progress in this area. The childminder also notes how he reacts when he is not winning. A few weeks ago, he was finding it hard to regulate his emotions. Today, he is coping well.

### Example 2

Rosa is 12 months old. Today her key person notes that she has slept longer than usual and that one cheek is slightly red. Rosa seems to need more comforting than usual and when her key person shares a book with her, Rosa repeatedly tries to bite on it. Her key person believes that she might be teething and looks for some objects that Rosa can safely chew on. Her key person makes a mental note to let Rosa's parent know at handover that she might be teething.

## Penny T's advice

As we have seen, formative assessment is a thought process by which we reflect on what we are noticing. In my work with practitioners, I have found it helpful to divide this process into five broad steps. Please feel free to use this approach if you feel it would be helpful.

## Penny's five-step approach to formative assessment

- 1 What is this child doing and saying?** This is about being very observant to all aspects of a child's activity. Here are some examples of questions that might guide your thoughts as you watch how a child is playing or involved in an activity:
  - What skills are being shown?
  - How easily is the child managing these skills?
  - How is the child coping with any difficulties?
  - How much is the child concentrating?
  - Does the child's posture seem comfortable or tense?
  - How much social interaction is there if the child is with others?
  - How easily is the child communicating?
- 2 Does this seem typical for the age?** Ideally, everyone working with a child should know how old the child is and also what the characteristics of their age range are.
- 3 What does this mean right now?** This is about any immediate actions that we need to take, including finding other resources, making suggestions, or helping the child with their play or activity. In some cases, a child's body language may tell us that, for instance, a visit to the toilet is needed or that they have become cold.
- 4 What does this mean for later on today or tomorrow?** This is about planning resources, strategies and following up on children's interests in terms of short-term planning.
- 5 Is there anything significant that needs recording or sharing with others?** If we notice something significant for the child or that is likely to be of interest to others, we may need to record it. This can be a quick note, conversation or, if very developmentally significant, an addition to a child's records.

# Attention, listening and turn taking

## 0–1 years



### How to support this

- Recognise that babies need to form strong relationships with their key person as this will help them to make eye contact.
- Provide sustained eye contact when feeding babies.
- Position yourself so that babies can see your face and eyes.
- Make eye contact or gain babies' attention before talking to or playing with them.
- Avoid background music and reduce background noise so that babies can focus on your voice.

### What you might see

Babies who turn their heads when they hear a noise or familiar voice

### Look out for ...

A lack of interest in adults or the environment



## Time to smile!

0–1 years

Making eye contact and gaining a smile from a baby is an important way to develop early communication. Most babies smile from about 6 weeks and will increasingly do so in response to seeing an adult smile.

Choose a time when the baby is settled and hold the baby. Smile and look directly at them while encouraging the baby to smile. When the baby returns the smile, acknowledge this by talking and smiling back.

### Observation points

How long does the baby take to respond to your smile?

When you stop smiling, does the baby try to make you smile?

### Consider also

Taking photographs of the baby smiling and laminating them. Make the photographs into a book.

Playing games or using rhymes that involve eye contact, such as peek-a-boo or 'Round and round the garden like a teddy bear'.

0-1  
YEARS

## Finger rhymes

0–1 years

Finger rhymes can help babies to make eye contact, but also help them to tune in to the sounds in words. There are many finger rhymes you can use, such as:

- Two little dicky birds
- Pat-a-cake, pat-a cake
- Round and round the garden like a teddy bear.

If you are not sure about the words to the rhymes, look out for a nursery rhyme book or go to the National Literacy Trust's website: [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

Choose a time when the baby is settled and not tired. Put the baby on your lap and slowly say the rhyme while touching the baby. Make plenty of eye contact with the baby as a way of drawing them in to the play. If the baby responds well, immediately repeat the rhyme. Use the rhyme several times over the next few days.

### Observation points

Does the baby respond to the rhyme?

### Consider also

Incorporating finger rhymes into routines, such as nappy changing or mealtimes.

Finding out from parents which rhymes they use at home.

Telling parents about the rhymes you have introduced as they may want to follow up at home.



# Attention, listening and turn taking 1–2 years



## How to support this

- Recognise that babies and toddlers need to form strong relationships with their key person in order for language to develop.
- Provide sustained eye contact when communicating with babies and toddlers.
- Record babies' and toddlers' recognition of words or phrases.
- Keep unnecessary background noise to a minimum.

## What you might see

Babies and toddlers starting to recognise frequently used words and phrases

Toddlers who listen and respond to everyday instructions

Toddler starting to focus for short periods on self-chosen activities

## Look out for ...

Toddlers not responding to different voice tones

Toddlers who are easily distracted by any noise in the environment

## Row, row, row your boat!

1–2 years

Toddlers love to be part of activities that adults are involved in. Action rhymes are a good way of helping toddlers to learn to listen and to attend.

If you don't know the words, put on a recording of 'Row, row, row your boat' and sing along with the words. Put the baby or toddler on your lap and involve them in making the actions to accompany the song.

### Observation points

Does the baby or toddler enjoy this activity?

Does the baby or toddler begin to predict the movements or join in with the sounds?



### Consider also

Repeating this activity often so that the babies and toddlers become familiar with the action rhyme.

Planning other action rhymes with toddlers.

1–2  
YEARS

## Sound wall

1–2 years

Toddlers love to explore sounds and ways of making sounds, so they will enjoy playing with a sound wall. By playing with sounds, children will learn the skills of listening.

To construct a sound wall, first find a fence. Attach different objects to the fence that can be used to make a noise. These might include saucepans, filled plastic shakers, saucepan lids, metal colanders or dustbin lids. The aim is that the children can make sounds by getting the objects to touch each other or by hitting them with their hands or a stick. It is important that the objects are securely tied and that adults are on hand to supervise if the children are given sticks.

### Observation points

Are the children interested in the different sounds?



### Planning

Talk to the children about the sounds they are making.

Encourage the children to find new ways of making sounds with the objects.

Work with the children to find new things to hang on the fence.



# Attention, listening and turn taking

## 2–3 years



### How to support this

- Make sure that you have the child's attention before talking to them, for example, say their name.
- As children find it hard to listen while being busy, if necessary, wait for a break in their play.
- Aim to teach a new rhyme or song every week.
- Make up rhymes that link to children's names.
- Put out musical instruments and play games to encourage children to hear and respond to different sounds.
- Regularly check children's hearing by seeing if they can respond to sounds that take place out of sight.

### What you might see

Children who can listen to talk that is addressed to them

Children who can concentrate on play but cannot split their attention with listening while playing

### Look out for ...

Children who cannot listen to simple instructions

Children who find it hard to concentrate on self-chosen activities

## Sound pairs

2–3 years

Look for some identical small containers, such as small boxes, opaque bottles or film canisters. Split up the containers into pairs and put identical materials in each pair, for example, rice, dried peas, cat bells or buttons. Make sure that the containers are sealed. Put all the containers into a box or basket. Encourage the children to pick up the containers and shake them. Can they find any of the matching pairs?

### Observation points

Are the children interested in this activity?  
Can the children find the sound pairs easily?



### Planning

Make shakers with the children using the same materials that were used to make the sound pairs. Can they find which of their containers sound like the ones in the pairs basket?

Make some new pairs, but choose materials that will make very similar sounds, for example, rice and couscous.

2–3  
YEARS

## Say hello to the puppet

2–3 years

Puppets are worth introducing to children from 2 years onwards as the children are often intrigued by them, so they are useful ways of getting their attention. If your puppet ‘talks’, children are often keen to listen to what the puppet is saying.

Find a puppet that fits your hand well and one that you enjoy using. Try to get a puppet with a moving mouth, if possible. Put the puppet onto your hand, out of sight of the children. Partially hide it and gradually allow the children to see the puppet’s head and face emerge. To encourage children who are hesitant to come closer, make the puppet bury its head into your arm and then play ‘peepeo’ with the puppet. Tell the children that the puppet likes being stroked. Talk to the puppet and to the children.

### Observation points

Do the children respond well to the puppet?  
Do the children listen if the puppet talks?



### Planning

Bring out the puppet in other situations, such as at mealtimes or when the children are feeling tired.

Find objects for the puppet to show the children.



## Attention, listening and turn taking



## How to support this

- Plan games to help children hear and order sounds.
- Sing songs that have strong sound patterns.
- Draw children's attention to sounds, including those in their name.
- Plan a programme of rhymes.

## What you might see

Children who can concentrate on their play for 10–15 minutes

## Look out for ...

Children who find it hard to listen and follow simple instructions

Children with poor attention skills and who are easily distracted

## The hot and cold game with sounds

3–4 years

Give a small group of children a shaker each. Ask a child to look away while you hide an object. When the child returns to the group, tell the child to start looking for the object. Ask the other children to help them by making loud sounds if the child is getting close to the hidden object (getting 'hot') and quiet sounds if the child is moving away from the hidden object (getting 'cold').

### Observation points

Do the children enjoy playing this game?



### Consider also

Varying the game by using a range of different shakers.

Varying the game by changing the sounds that the children have to make, for example, fast shaking if the child is getting close and slow shaking if the child is moving away.

3-4  
YEARS

## Hands up!

3–4 years

Listening out for certain sounds requires children to focus their attention. There are many games that you can play to help with this.

Find three or four items that will make distinct sounds, for example, a bunch of keys, a shaker and a bell. Create a low screen so that children cannot see your hands or the objects. Ask the children to listen out for a certain sound, for example the shaker, and to put their hands up when they hear it.

### Observations points

Are there any children who are slow to respond?

Do the children enjoy the activity?



### Consider also

Using items that make similar sounds.

Asking individual children to make the sounds.

Asking children to name the object making the sound.

# Attention, listening and turn taking

## 4–5 years



### How to support this

- If they are busy, gain children's attention before talking to them.
- Make eye contact with children as you interact.
- Keep environments as calm and quiet as possible.
- Create some smaller, quieter areas for activities that require high levels of attention.
- Consider the best position for play opportunities that are noisy or involve a lot of moving as these can distract other children.
- Model good listening skills when children are talking to you.

### What you might see

Children who are able to listen during some activities

Children who can sit and focus on a short story

Children showing high levels of concentration for periods of time during child-initiated activities

### Look out for ...

Children who find it hard to concentrate or who 'flit' around instead of playing

Children whose attention is very hard to gain



## Find the colour

4–5 years

Musical games often help with children's attention and listening skills. Put up four large cards of different colours. Draw children's attention to the colours. Put on some music for them to dance or move to. Tell the children that when the music stops, you will call the name of a colour and they will need to go towards the colour.

### Observation points

Are there any children who are consistently slow to respond?

How quickly do children respond to the calling of the colour?



### Consider also

Playing again but using cards with animals on them.

Playing other musical games, such as musical statues, or games involving children having to move in a certain way according to the sound being played.

## Can you recognise these sounds?

4–5 years

This is a fun activity that is easy to organise if you use modern technology. Use a recording device to record some everyday sounds, such as turning on a tap, a dog barking, the sounds of children playing outdoors and a clock that ticks. Play the recordings back through a laptop, computer or mobile device. Can the children work out what sounds they are hearing?

### Observation points

Do the children enjoy this game?

Are they able to recognise some of the sounds?



### Consider also

Finding ways for the children to choose and record other everyday sounds.