

Introduction

Play Activities for the Early Years provides over 100 activities to guide and inspire practitioners as they support children's learning and development across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Each activity promotes learning through play. Every unique child should be offered quality play experiences, within an enabling environment, and encouraged to form positive relationships with both adults and peers.

The new, revised *Statutory Framework for the EYFS* (from September 2012) sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five and states that the characteristics of effective learning are: Playing and exploring, Active learning and Creating and thinking critically.

The activities presented in this book can enhance children's natural eagerness to learn and progress. Becoming deeply involved in uninterrupted play for extended periods, persevering with self-chosen ideas and challenges and enjoying their experiences and achievements helps children to reach their full potential. The book will be useful to early years practitioners working in a variety of settings, such as school reception classes, nurseries, preschools, playgroups, toddler groups or as childminders.

The activity sheets can be used by practitioners for purposes such as:

- ◆ planning opportunities to offer in response to the needs and interests of individuals and groups of children
- ◆ assessment and the keeping of records, summaries and children's profiles
- ◆ guiding support staff and other adults in their participation in children's learning
- ◆ explaining the focus and the learning objectives alongside children's work and projects on display
- ◆ sharing ideas with parents and carers to enhance their understanding of their children's learning and to offer suggestions of follow-up activities that might be explored at home.

Using the activities in this book will enable practitioners to provide high quality learning opportunities and experiences for children within the Foundation Stage. While they are most suitable for those aged 30-60 months, they may be easily adapted to suit younger children, those at different developmental stages and those with individual, specific or additional needs. Each activity is linked to the appropriate Early Learning Goals from the guidance document, *Development Matters*, which indicate the level of progress that most children are expected to attain by the end of the EYFS.

The book is concise and simple to use and allows early years practitioners to plan, develop and assess day-to-day activities within their settings with confidence and enthusiasm, either by trying out each activity methodically or by dipping into them for appropriate or seasonal inspiration at any time throughout the year.

How to use this book

The *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) sets out the Learning and Development Requirements that must shape provision in all early years settings. From September 2012, there are three prime areas and four specific areas of learning and development that are mandatory.

This book is divided into seven chapters, to cover each of these areas and its particular Early Learning Goals (ELGs).

Each chapter has a similar format and includes:

Chapter introduction

The chapter introduction describes key skills and concepts for the area of learning and development. The two or three mandatory Early Learning Goals (ELGs) for the particular prime or specific area within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012) are summarized, along with details of how the activities can help to encourage children to work towards the appropriate ELGs.

Table of learning opportunities

The table shows how the activities will help children to work towards, or achieve, each ELG. Where activities work towards more than one ELG and fit into more than one area, this too has been indicated. The table on pages 205–213 provides a handy summary of all the activities in the book, making it an invaluable planning tool. All the tables may be photocopied and used for planning and assessment.

Activity pages

To make the book easy to use, each activity page has a similar format, with the following headings:

- ◆ Resources – that are needed to carry out the activity
- ◆ Group size – that the activity is most suited to
- ◆ Activity – with step-by-step instructions and explanations
- ◆ Extensions – to reinforce learning, offer new challenges, extend progress and provide links to other areas of development
- ◆ Learning objectives – detailing the skills and experiences that may be acquired while engaged in the activity
- ◆ Links to Early Learning Goals – that the activity will help and encourage children to attain during the EYFS.

Many of the activities are linked to sheets that may be photocopied and used with the children to support or extend the learning opportunities. These are found immediately after the relevant activities within each chapter.

Book about me

Resources

Scrap book; photos of children with their families (provided by children); pencils; felt-tip pens

Group size

Large groups

Activity

- ◆ Explain to children that they are going to make an information book about themselves.
- ◆ Point out that books that provide information are called non-fiction books.
- ◆ Give each child a scrap book and ask them to bring in some photos of themselves and their families.
- ◆ Ask them to write simple sentences using words they know. Encourage them to attempt to write any words they do not know by using letter sounds.
- ◆ Allow them to work as independently as possible.
- ◆ Act as a scribe for children who are less confident.
- ◆ Finish by letting the children swap books with each other so they can learn about each other.
- ◆ Put the books in the book corner.

Learning objectives

- ◆ Understanding that information can be found in books
- ◆ Forming positive images of themselves and their peers
- ◆ Attempting to read and write simple words and sentences

Extensions

- ◆ Ask children to make a book about their best friend. They must first interview their friend to get the information they need.
- ◆ Read a variety of non-fiction books and point out the contents and index pages.
- ◆ Invite the children to use a computer to type up their work.
- ◆ Give children a pile of books and ask them to sort them into fiction and non-fiction.
- ◆ Ask children to sight read some words. Cover up the words and ask the children to try to write the words using their memory and knowledge of phonics.

Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Communication and language: Understanding, Speaking
- ◆ Physical development: Moving and handling
- ◆ Literacy: Reading, Writing
- ◆ Understanding the world: Technology

Chopstick challenge

Resources

Chopsticks or tweezers; small objects (buttons, beads, erasers, small world toys); pots; sand timer

Group size

Small groups

Activity

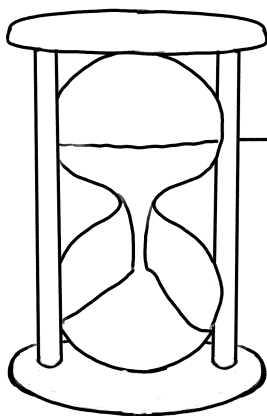
- ◆ Lay out some small objects on a flat surface.
- ◆ Give each child a small pot and some chopsticks or tweezers.
- ◆ Show children how to use the chopsticks using a tripod grip.
- ◆ Explain to children that you are going to give them a challenge. The challenge is to pick up as many items as they can using the chopsticks before the sand timer finishes.
- ◆ Start the sand timer. Help the children to hold the chopsticks correctly.
- ◆ Count how many items each child has collected.

Learning objectives

- ◆ Fine motor skills while handling equipment and tools
- ◆ Control and hand–eye coordination in small movements
- ◆ Concentration and responding to and following instructions
- ◆ Counting skills

Extensions

- ◆ Cook some noodles and ask children to try to eat them using the chopsticks.
- ◆ Put glue onto a picture and then sprinkle on some glitter or sand using a finger–thumb grip.
- ◆ Thread beads onto laces.
- ◆ Draw pictures or patterns using different tools, such as chalk, cotton buds, feathers.



Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Physical development: Moving and handling
- ◆ Communication and language: Understanding
- ◆ Mathematics: Numbers

Sunflowers

Resources

Empty pots; soil; sunflower seeds; water; watering cans

Group size

Pairs

Activity

- ◆ Explain to the children that they are going to plant some sunflower seeds to make the outdoor area look nice.
- ◆ Provide a pot for each pair of children. Ask them to put in some soil, place in the seeds and then cover with some more soil.
- ◆ Water the pots with the children and then explain to them that it is now their responsibility to water the pots regularly.
- ◆ Explain that the seeds will not survive without water, but that too much water is also bad.
- ◆ Encourage the children to decide which one of them is going to water and when.
- ◆ Point out that plants also need sunlight to grow so the children must decide on the best place to put their pots.
- ◆ Encourage the children to look after their plants independently.
- ◆ After two weeks check which plants have grown. If some have not grown, ask the children why.

Learning objectives

- ◆ Cooperation, sharing and turn taking with a partner
- ◆ Caring for living things
- ◆ Taking some responsibility for remembering and carrying out regular tasks
- ◆ Fine motor skills
- ◆ Understanding the consequences of their actions or inactions
- ◆ Taking pride in achievements

Extensions

- ◆ Ask the children to plant some cress seeds in order to make sandwiches for lunch time – if they don't grow any, then they won't be able to make cress sandwiches.
- ◆ Invite the children to look after the class pet.
- ◆ Observe some mini-beasts. Ensure the children understand how to pick them up and handle them carefully.
- ◆ Talk about how the children look after any pets they have at home.
- ◆ Discuss the things plants need to grow (see *My own garden*, page 163).
- ◆ Read the book *Daisy's Giant Sunflower* by Emma Damon (Tango Books).

Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Personal, social and emotional development: Self-confidence and self-awareness, Managing feelings and behaviour, Making relationships
- ◆ Communication and language: Understanding
- ◆ Physical development: Moving and handling
- ◆ Understanding the world: The world

Mixed-up sentence

Resources

Strips of paper; pencils; scissors; glue; workbooks (or paper)

Group size

Small groups, then individually

Activity

- ◆ Ask a child to give you a sentence about what they like to do while at the setting. For example, 'I like to play football.'
- ◆ Write the sentence on a strip of paper.
- ◆ Now ask the child to read it with you.
- ◆ Cut up the sentence into separate words.
- ◆ Ask the child to put the words back into the correct order to make a sentence again.
- ◆ Let the children stick the words into their workbooks (or on a sheet of paper). Older children could be asked to write the sentence themselves underneath.
- ◆ Point out to the children the use of a capital letter at the beginning and a full stop at the end. Encourage them to use punctuation in their writing.

Learning objectives

- ◆ Recognizing and reading simple and common words
- ◆ Putting together words to form a sentence
- ◆ Writing simple words, using correct letter formation
- ◆ Holding and using a pencil effectively in order to write

Extensions

- ◆ Write a sentence but miss off the ending. Ask children to add different endings (see Finish the sentence, page 103).
- ◆ Ask the children to count how many words they can read.
- ◆ Write the children's names and then cut up the letters and use them to make other words.
- ◆ Ask children whether they can read any of their friends' names.
- ◆ Ask older children to write their names on a board when they arrive at the setting, beside the activity they would like to choose. Younger children could stick their name card beside their chosen activity.

Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Literacy: Reading, Writing
- ◆ Physical development: Moving and handling

Shape pizza

Resources

1 pizza base; tomato puree; 3 rectangular pieces of ham; 4 circular pieces of tomato; 5 triangular pieces of cheese; 6 spherical olives; 7 triangular pieces of pineapple; 8 pieces of sweetcorn; baking tray; large plate; oven; knife

Group size

Small groups

Activity

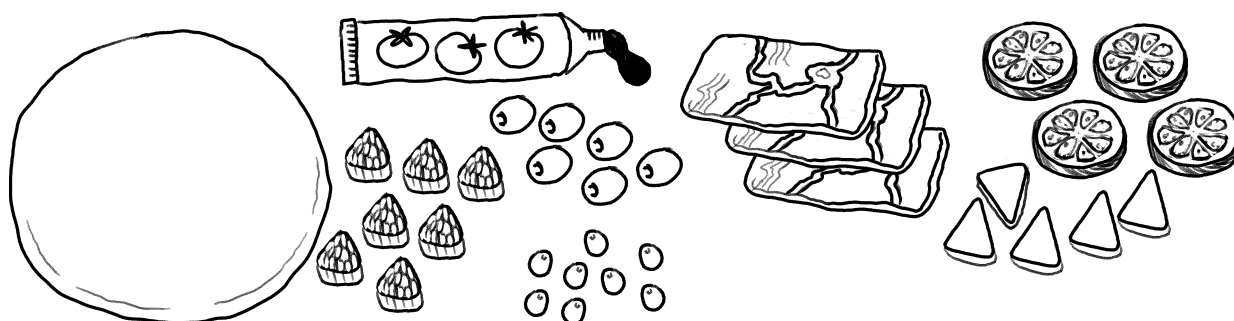
- ◆ Begin by explaining to the children that they are going to make a pizza.
- ◆ Place the pizza base on a baking tray. Talk about the shape.
- ◆ Squeeze two oval squirts of tomato puree onto the base and ask, 'What shape is this?'
- ◆ Ask one child to spread the puree all over the base.
- ◆ Place the ingredients on a large plate and talk to the children about the different shapes. For example, 'What shape are the tomato slices?'
- ◆ Arrange the ingredients on the pizza, counting out the quantities.
- ◆ Bake in an oven at 220°C/425°F/gas mark 7 for 10 minutes. Cut up and enjoy.

Learning objectives

- ◆ Identifying and naming different 2D and 3D shapes and fractions
- ◆ Counting skills
- ◆ Recording information in a chart
- ◆ Understanding of healthy and unhealthy food choices

Extensions

- ◆ Encourage the children to not only look at the shapes but also feel them (using more than one sense enhances learning).
- ◆ Use a cardboard base and paper toppings to make an imaginary pizza.
- ◆ When cutting the pizza talk about halves and quarters.
- ◆ Make a salad and garlic bread to go with the pizza.
- ◆ Talk about healthy/unhealthy food (see Healthy food plate, page 58).
- ◆ Make a bar chart of the children's favourite pizza toppings.
- ◆ Write a shopping list of the ingredients.



Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Mathematics: Numbers, Shape, space and measures
- ◆ Physical development: Health and self-care

Pick a country

Resources

Globe, magazines, pictures, books and CD-Roms about the chosen country; travel agency role-play area (see page 181 for labels); large poster-size paper and coloured pens

Group size

Whole class, then small groups

Activity

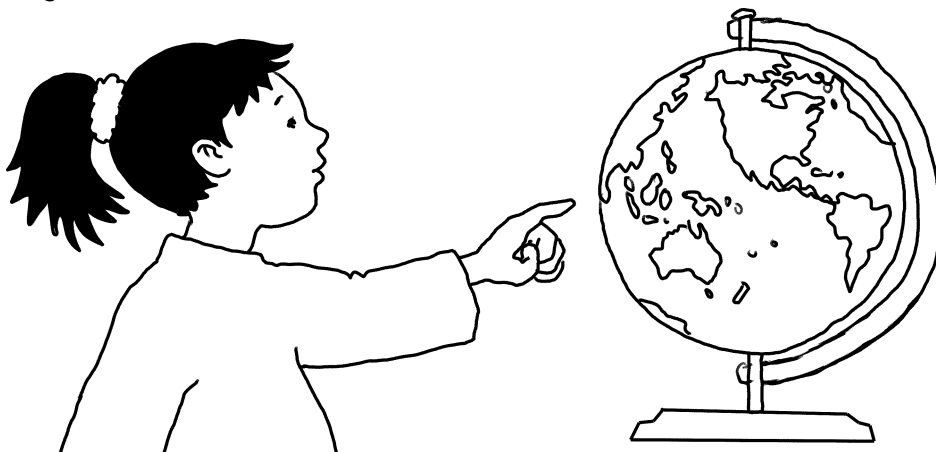
- ◆ Begin by choosing a country for the week. You could spin a globe and ask a child to close their eyes and point to a country.
- ◆ Gather information with the children about the chosen country.
- ◆ Discuss the similarities and differences between the chosen country and the country the children live in.
- ◆ Divide the children into small groups and give each group a large sheet of paper.
- ◆ Explain that you would like the children to make a poster about the country for display in the travel agency role-play area. They can draw, or cut and stick pictures from magazines.
- ◆ Allow children uninterrupted time to play freely in the role-play area, encouraging them to take turns to be travel agents and customers.

Learning objectives

- ◆ Knowledge and awareness of other countries of the world
- ◆ Understanding and awareness of different cultures, similarities and differences
- ◆ Working cooperatively as part of a group
- ◆ Gathering information from a variety of sources

Extensions

- ◆ Invite people who have lived in or visited the chosen country to come into the setting and talk to the children about it.
- ◆ Write a list of all the things the children would need to pack for a holiday in the chosen country.
- ◆ Make a travel brochure about the chosen country.
- ◆ Design a postcard that might be sent by someone on holiday in the chosen country.



Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Understanding the world: People and communities
- ◆ Personal, social and emotional development: Managing feelings and behaviour
- ◆ Literacy: Reading

Textured pictures

Resources

Clear glue; cardboard box; sand, salt and sawdust – all in shakers; paper; paint brushes

Group size

Large groups

Learning objectives

- ◆ Listening and speaking skills
- ◆ Following instructions and adapting them for independent design
- ◆ Awareness of different materials and their textures through the sense of touch
- ◆ Exploring new materials, equipment and resources

Activity

- ◆ Invite the children to draw a simple picture. Choose a theme if it helps children to focus, for example a picture of the seaside.
- ◆ Ask the children to paint glue all over the picture.
- ◆ Now using the shakers show children how to shake sand, salt and sawdust onto different parts of the picture.
- ◆ Tip any surplus into a box.
- ◆ When the picture is dry, ask the children to feel it and talk about the different textures. Introduce descriptive words such as 'rough', 'smooth' and 'sharp'.

Extensions

- ◆ Invite children to feel the sand, salt and sawdust and to try to describe how they feel.
- ◆ Use sand, salt and sawdust in other art work.
- ◆ Mix sand, salt and sawdust with water and observe what happens.
- ◆ Find out how many cups of sand, salt or sawdust are needed to fill a selection of empty bottles and other containers.
- ◆ Allow the children some uninterrupted free play time to explore the materials.



Links to the Early Learning Goals

- ◆ Expressive arts and design: Exploring and using media and materials
- ◆ Communication and language: Understanding