

# Early Years words and phrases explained; a guide for parents and carers - Part 1

We use lots of words and phrases when we talk about early years education.  
Here is a collection of some of them with explanations.

## Early Years

The period of time your child spends developing and learning from birth to when they are five years old at the end of Reception year is called 'Early Years'.



## Areas of Learning

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is divided into 7 Areas of Learning. These shape activities and experiences for all children in early years settings. They are divided into two sections:

### **Prime Areas of Learning**

These are Communication and Language, Physical Development, Personal, Social and Emotional Development. They are important for building foundations in your child's development.

### **Specific Areas of Learning**

These are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World, Expressive Arts and Design. They are where the prime areas are used, developed and applied.

## The Early Years Foundation Stage

While your child is at an Early Years setting - nursery, childminder, Reception class - they will be assessed against the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework. This is a statutory document that all early years providers must follow, and includes learning and development as well as safeguarding and welfare requirements. The updated version of the EYFS Framework has been effective since September 2021.

## Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning

These are about how a child learns and the ways in which educators adapt their provision to support them. There are 3 Characteristics of Effective Teaching and Learning:

**Playing and Exploring** - finding out, experiencing, trying things.

**Active Learning** - keeping on trying when things get tricky and recognising their achievements.

**Creating and Thinking Critically** - having ideas, making links between ideas and developing strategies.

## Learning through play

Throughout their early years, young children do much of their learning through play. A play-based approach allows children to make choices and have ideas, follow their interests, have a go and find things out. All the Areas of Learning can be supported through play and it is particularly important for communication and language and social skills. Play can happen inside or outdoors. It helps children to make sense of their world, and to be imaginative. Adults support children's play and provide interesting resources.



## Early Years words and phrases explained; a guide for parents and carers - Part 2

We use lots of words and phrases when we talk about early years education.  
Here is a collection of some of them with explanations.

### Child-centred

A child-centred approach to learning is about listening to and noticing each child and responding to their individual interests. The adult supports their development by facilitating their learning with appropriate resources, experiences, and skillful guidance, enabling children to make choices. Partnership with parents and carers is crucial to a child-centred approach, enabling staff to learn about the whole child.

### Partnership with parents and carers

Respectful and equal partnership with parents and carers is very important in the Early Years, keeping the child at the centre of everything. You know your child best. When you share your child's interests and experiences with their setting, staff can use this to create opportunities that will engage them and support their development. Staff will also share your child's learning at the setting so you can build on this at home with lots of talk and play.

### Observations

When your child is in an Early Years setting, staff will watch and notice what they are doing so they can learn more about your child. This watching and noticing may sometimes be recorded, as a video, in words, in photos - this is called an 'observation'. An observation tells the adult what a child is interested in, how they learn, how they manage their feelings and where they are at in their stage of development. Observations help adults to adapt their provision to support your child's learning and development.

### Child development

Child development is the process of change that occurs in a child from birth - in Early Years we focus on the development from birth to 5 years old. Children continue on their developmental journey after they leave Early Years. Child development covers every aspect of growing and learning - physical, emotional, language, thought and social skills. Knowledge of typical child development informs early years educators and the provision they offer each child. Every child is unique and will follow their own development pathway.

### Early Learning Goals (ELGs)

The ELGs set out the expected level of development to be attained by children by the time they reach the end of the EYFS. There are 17 ELGs, one for each of the sections that make up the 7 Areas of Learning. Educators will use their professional judgement and their knowledge of each child when considering whether they are at the expected level of development.