

Teaching New Skills to Children

You are your child's first and most important teacher. Every day you are helping your child learn new information, skills and ways of behaving.

There are three useful ways you can help children learn everything from basic self-care to more complicated social skills:

instructions

step-by-step

modelling

Before you start

No matter which of the three methods you use, these tips will help your child learn new skills:

Before you start, make sure that your child is ready to learn the new skill.

Consider timing. Is your child alert?

Consider the environment. Is your child focused?

Give your child the **chance to practise** the skill.

Give encouragement.

Avoid giving lots of negative feedback if your child does not get it right.

You can use a **step-by-step approach**

Some tasks or activities are complicated or involve a sequence of actions. For these, you can break down the task into smaller steps.

The idea of step-by-step teaching is to outline the steps that make up a skill one at a time. When your child has learned the first step, then you teach the next step, then the next, and so on.

Example Skill - Putting on their t-shirt.

You could break down each of these steps into parts:

Face the t-shirt the right way.

Pull the t-shirt **over the head**.

Put **one arm** through.

Put the **other arm** through.

Pull the t-shirt **down**.

Only move on to the next skill when they have mastered this one. You can use this sequence for each item of getting dressed. Putting on their underpants, then their trousers, then their t-shirt, then their socks and finally shoes.

Be specific with encouragement – *'I see you put one sock on by yourself, try the other one now'*.

You can give instructions

We give our children instructions all the time. When teaching a new skill, here are the steps that help our instructions become learning:

Give instructions only when you have your child's attention. Use your child's name and encourage your child to look at you while you speak.

Get down to your child's physical level to speak.

Remove any background distractions like the TV.

Use language that your child understands. Keep your sentences short and simple.

Use a **clear, calm voice**.

Use **one instruction at a time**, for example; *'take off your coat.'* Then *'hang up your coat'*.

Use gestures to emphasise things that you want your child to notice.

Gradually phase out your instructions and reminders as your child gets better at remembering how to do the task.

You can use modelling

Through watching you, your child learns what to do and how to do it.

Modelling is usually the most efficient way to teach children a new skill. For example, you're more likely to show rather than tell your child how to tidy up, throw a ball, set a table or wash their hands. You can also use modelling to show your child skills and behaviour that involve non-verbal communication, like body language and tone of voice.

For example, you can show how you turn to face people when you talk to them, or look them in the eyes and smile when you thank them.

You can combine steps and modelling, for example, in social skills development. For example, if you are expecting a visitor to your home. Practise what will happen when they arrive.

Seo duit pictiúr díom agus rinne mé féin é

A picture of me for my teacher





Child's Personal Details

First name:

Likes to be known as:

Surname:

Date of birth:

Preschool Details

Preschool child is enrolled in:

Name of family member completing this form

First name:

Surname:

Relationship to child:

What would you like your child's new preschool to know about him/her?

Have you any suggestions that might help your child settle into preschool?

Is there additional information about your child that you would like to share with the preschool?



Resources to support your child's learning and development in preparing for preschool

Beginning preschool is an important and exciting time for young children and parents/guardians alike. Many parents/guardians wonder if there is anything that they can do at home to support their child's learning as they get ready for preschool, and the answer is 'Yes, there is!'

This information sheet provides links to videos and tip sheets with some practical advice for parents/guardians.

Supporting learning through play



Providing opportunities for your child to play and to communicate is important for their learning. Watch this two-minute video: [Key messages for parents on supporting children's learning and development](#).



Providing opportunities for your child to play inside and outside is important for their learning. They build relationships as well as learning about the world and the people and things that are in it through play. Read this [tip sheet](#) for ideas on how to help your child get the most from their play.

Learning through play is important for developing your child's independence, curiosity and resilience. You might like to learn more about this in the tip sheet: [Helping young children to develop positive learning dispositions](#).



Providing opportunities for your child to develop their imagination and to be creative through playing with cardboard boxes and household and recycled materials is important in supporting their learning. Watch this two-minute video: [Open-ended play resources](#).

Supporting learning through movement



Providing opportunities for your child to develop running, jumping, climbing and ball skills is important. Read this tip sheet to find out ways to support your child's physical development: [Nurturing children's physical well-being through Fundamental Movement Skills](#).



Supporting learning through early literacy



Reading stories to your child while also talking to them about the stories and the pictures is important. Use this time to introduce new words and ideas. You might even read a story about a child starting preschool! This tip sheet [Enjoying books](#) gives some ideas on choosing books and reading with your child. Here is a suggested list of books to enjoy with your child: [Toddler Reading List](#).



Speaking and listening to your child as well as pointing out words at home and in the locality will introduce them to the world of language—spoken and written. Read this tip sheet for practical ideas on introducing reading and writing to your child in an age-appropriate way: [Helping your young child to read and write](#).

Supporting learning through early maths



There are lots of ways you can support your child's maths skills at home. Watch this two-minute video: [Supporting mathematics: key messages for parents](#) to learn about the importance of your child playing with blocks, sticks and other similar items. Talking with your child about shapes, patterns and counting is also important.



Providing opportunities for your child to take part in and talk about everyday household tasks like shopping, setting the table and gardening is important. Read this tip sheet for more ideas on helping your child to understand maths: [Helping your young child with maths](#).



One area of maths is 'measure' and having the words to talk about 'measure' will be helpful for your child's learning. Read this tip sheet for ideas on how you might introduce your child to 'measure' vocabulary: [Learning about measure](#).