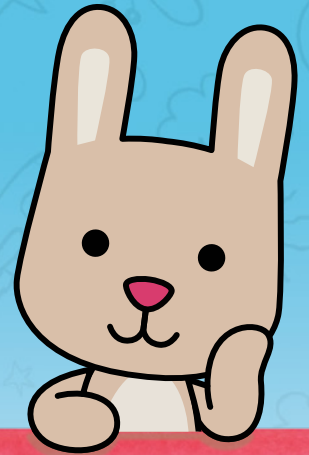


Second Edition

Doodle Town



LANGUAGE

LITERACY

PHYSICAL
DEVELOPMENT

MATH

COGNITIVE
DEVELOPMENT

CREATIVE
DEVELOPMENT

SOCIOEMOTIONAL
DEVELOPMENT



SCHOOL
READINESS

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Introduction

The early years in a child's life are a vital learning opportunity and have a powerful influence on the rest of their lives. Children interact cognitively, personally, emotionally, physically, and socially with the world around them. These years form the springboard for creating confident learners and valuable citizens.

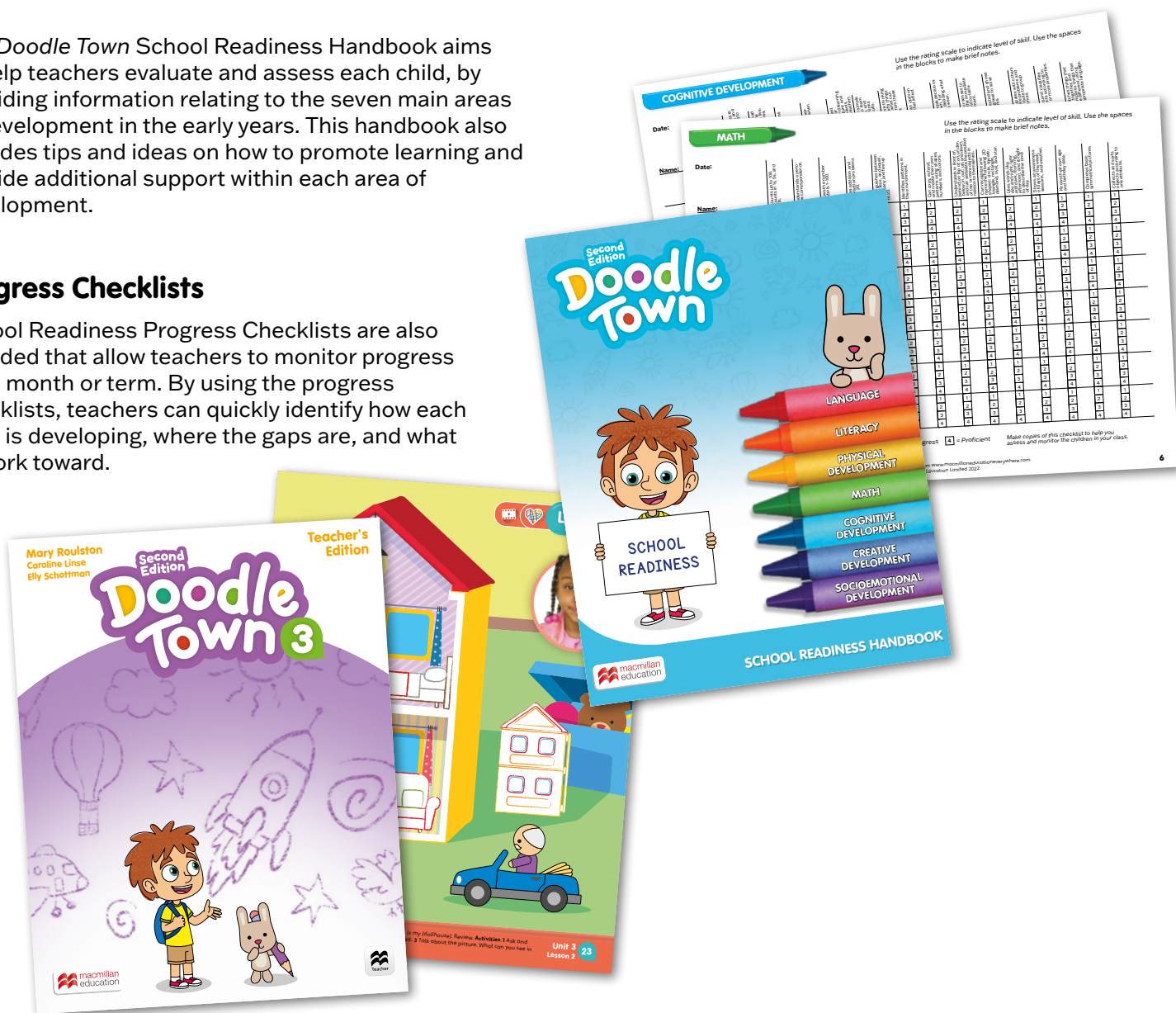
Education in the early years is an important phase of learning and also a step toward formal schooling. Children progress at different rates, and their achievements may vary, but all children should have the opportunity to develop holistically by being exposed to an early years program that promotes learning in all areas of development.

It is important to have a way of evaluating and assessing each individual child in order to establish how "ready" they are for formal schooling.

The *Doodle Town School Readiness Handbook* aims to help teachers evaluate and assess each child, by providing information relating to the seven main areas of development in the early years. This handbook also includes tips and ideas on how to promote learning and provide additional support within each area of development.

Progress Checklists

School Readiness Progress Checklists are also included that allow teachers to monitor progress each month or term. By using the progress checklists, teachers can quickly identify how each child is developing, where the gaps are, and what to work toward.



What is School Readiness?

School Readiness is a term that is used to indicate when a child is physically, cognitively, and emotionally ready to attend school. It is an ongoing process, as it is constantly influenced by outside factors; children can be encouraged to develop and perfect new skills from a range of new experiences, thereby getting them better equipped to handle formal schooling.

Family

Families play an important role in helping children get ready for school. Children thrive within supportive and loving families that encourage exploration and provide a wealth of opportunities to learn. Even family trips to the supermarket can extend a child's knowledge. Parents can create a shopping list with their children and then encourage them to help find the items. Asking children to find a specific type of pasta, for example, is a great visual discrimination and visual figure-ground activity

Community

Support within a community is also vital and should include social support for parents and learning opportunities for children. Libraries and children's centers are a necessary resource in any community. Teachers can encourage parents to find these within their community and make use of them.

School

Schools also play a fundamental role in preparing children for School Readiness. Schools have certain expectations from children, and it's important that they make these clear with local child care providers and preschools. This then ensures a smoother transition into formal schooling.



No child can become ready for school on his or her own, which is why it is important that not only teachers, but also parents, communities, and schools, understand the principles of School Readiness.

The importance of School Readiness

A child's first six years set the stage for future learning and success in school and life. Their early experiences provide the foundation for language, communication, problem solving, social and emotional skills, and behavior. Success in school begins before a child even enters a classroom. Some children may enter school with limited language skills, various health problems, or possibly some social and emotional problems that will interfere with their learning.

The larger the gap at the start of school, the harder it is to close. Bearing this in mind, it is vital that schools and teachers make good choices in these early years, including an adequate School Readiness program. This program should mean children are individually and regularly assessed and encouraged to develop necessary skills to make their transition to formal education as smooth as possible.

The areas of development in School Readiness

Children develop at different rates. There are stages of development at every age, which cannot be hurried, but skills can be fostered within each stage in order for a child to progress. When looking at a child holistically, there are various areas that need to be developed in order for the child to be deemed school ready. Within this document we have outlined seven areas of development. Although we have defined these seven areas, you will see from the descriptions how closely they tie into each other.

The seven areas of development are:



The pages that follow provide information for the seven areas of development; you will also find:

- a **Description** of the area of development
- a list of **Measurable Skills** that children should attain
- a variety of **Activity Ideas** to promote and support selected skills
- a variety of **Additional Support Ideas** for some common specific problem areas (not all children acquire the skills they need at the same pace; therefore, further development may be needed).

Description

Language is a child's key to communication and interaction with their world. Children are constantly developing their language and communication skills in every aspect of their learning. As these skills are crucial, it is important that they are effectively developed. In a language-rich environment, language learning opportunities are offered throughout the day.

Within Language, we can include the following: vocabulary and phonemic awareness, speaking and communication skills, and early writing skills.



Measurable Skills

Language Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of language development, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following:

- Understand and follow at least four consecutive instructions.
- Listen to others and respond appropriately, by asking questions and communicating thoughts and ideas.
- Speak audibly and express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.
- Show a basic command of the conventions of English grammar and usage when speaking.
- Identify themselves by name and age, state factors in their life, and name family members.



Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support literacy and attention skills:

Use an agreed gesture to indicate whether the noise level is too loud, e.g., a sound toy, like a tambourine; or a visual prompt, like waving a hand in the air, to let children know it is too noisy and we need to be quieter.

Use visual support when talking to the children, e.g., objects or pictures. Also, use your voice — make it go up and down, or make it more interesting for children as this helps them listen.

Keep language simple. Don't overload the child with too many words, complex vocabulary, and grammatical structures.

Give short one- or two-minute learning breaks. Breaks help children refocus and learn; moreover, research has found that breaks in which the child moves around are the most effective. Children could go and get a drink, put something in the trash, or do quick TPR exercises.

Creating a communication-friendly setting:

A communication-friendly setting is about the whole learning environment. It is not just about the building you are in or the types of resources and materials that you provide for the children.

Communication-friendly settings:

- Can be made with very few resources.
- Do not require spacious, purpose-built accommodation.
- Are about the ways in which the adults listen to and talk, interact, and play with the children.
- Involve planning and providing opportunities that interest and excite the children and make them want to talk.
- Encourage responding to children's attempts to communicate to help them develop their speech and language skills.

How to create a communication-friendly setting:

Make a plan of your classroom. Think about places in the setting where good talking takes place (this may be places where children initiate talk, or where lots of child-centered talking takes place). Take a red pen and mark with a cross where the talking "hot-spots" are: places where adults and children engage in conversation or where children talk to each other. Add one cross if talking takes place there sometimes, and more crosses if it takes place there a lot. Take a blue pen and mark with a circle the places where you think talking could take place but does not at the moment. Think of ways you could encourage more talking to happen in these areas.

Consider the class seating arrangements. Seating them in pairs is best for individual work and speaking partners. Sitting a semi-circle arrangement during teacher talk time improves the listening of the whole class.

Place objects of interest, artwork and posters around the room. These can be things the children have made as well as *Doodle Town* posters and other resources, but they should be things that provoke interest and discussion.

Activities to promote and support speaking and communication skills:

Encourage children to talk, either in pairs or groups, or as part of the whole class, and to share their news with you and each other.

Have a regular "show and tell," where each child gets a turn bringing an item or a picture from home to talk about.

Talk about the events for the day, the date, complete the weather chart, and name children who have birthdays.

Include a fantasy area in your classroom where children can play freely and chat with their friends.

Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child struggles to follow instructions:

Begin with one simple instruction, for example, *Walk to the table*. Make eye contact with the child to get their undivided attention. Have the child repeat back the instructions to make certain they understand. Then add a few more instructions to the first, making a sequence: *Walk to the table and get a book*.

Games to encourage listening and attention skills:

Listen and Remember

The class sits in a semi-circle. Begin a sentence and have children add to it, e.g., *I like apples...* The next child repeats the sentence and adds another item, e.g., *I like apples and I like grapes*.

Copy Me

The class sits in a semi-circle. Clap a short sequence, e.g., clap three times, or clap twice quickly then pause and clap twice again. The child to your left copies the sequence, the child to their left claps the sequence, and so on until everyone in the class has clapped it.

When everyone has clapped the sequence, start again but clap a more complicated sequence, e.g., increase the number of claps or vary the rhythm.

Repeat, but this time have a child start the clapping instead of you. The class copies his/her sequence. To practice watching rather than listening skills, do the same thing but with actions, e.g., two hops and a jump.



Go!

The class sits in semi-circle so you can see everyone. Say *Listen carefully. I am going to tell you to do something. For example, jump! Turn around! Don't do it until I say Go!*

Have the class stand up. Say an instruction and leave a short pause before you say *Go!* Example instructions: *Stand up... Go! Pat your head ... Go! Close your eyes ... Go! Clap twice ... Go!*

Swap Places

The class sits in a circle on chairs so you can see everyone. Draw vocabulary items on the board, e.g., four or five types of fruit. Go around the class touching each child's head and telling them which item they are, e.g., *You are a banana. You are an apple. You are a pear. You are a grape. You are a peach. You are a banana.* Check they can remember what fruit they are, e.g., *Put your hand up if you are a pear.*

When you say an item, e.g., *banana*, all the children who are bananas have to swap places. After a few turns, sit down in a child's place when the children are changing places so one child is left without a seat. That child then calls out a fruit and tries to make sure that he/she gets a seat so another child is left standing.

Stand up, Sit down

The class sits in a semi-circle so you can see everyone. Get everyone to stand up and sit down. Tell the class you are going to tell them something. They have to listen carefully. If they think it is true, they stand up. If they think it isn't true, they stay sitting down. Example statements: *Milk is purple. Spiders have eight legs. I have orange eyes.*

Listen and Jump

The class stands in a semi-circle so you can see everyone. Give an instruction involving an action that the children have to do. e.g., *(If you have) blue eyes, jump! (If you) have a sister, jump!*

Ideas to promote speaking:

Make it easy for the child to look at you; squat down so you are eye-level with children when you have one-to-one conversations with them.

Take all opportunities to expand on language output. If a child gives you a one-word answer, then give praise and repeat their answer back in a longer sentence, e.g., Teacher: *Where are the pens?* Child: *Table.* Teacher: *That's right! The pens are on the table.*

Always ask questions. Ask questions about pictures in the book, about what they're doing, and about personal information whenever you can. You could start the class every lesson with the same questions as part of a routine, e.g., *What day is it today? What's the weather like? Who's sitting next to you today?*

Description

While the Language section focuses on the production and reception of spoken language (speaking and listening skills), Literacy focuses more on the production and reception of written language (writing and reading skills). Emergent reading and writing in a second language will run in parallel with the emergent skills in the children's own language (or at a slower pace if the children's first language uses a non-Roman alphabet).

Reading starts orally with the recognition of the sounds and understanding of how they combine to make words. Children then learn the letters that correspond to each sound. Early writing skills tie in to the recognition of letters and also the fine motor skills needed to hold and guide a pencil (see Physical Development). The enjoyment of books, recognition of rhyming words, and print awareness also fall under the Literacy umbrella.

Measurable Skills

Literacy Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of literacy development, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following.

- Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
- Follow text in a book from left to right, top to bottom, and page by page.
- Predict what will happen in a story by looking at the pictures, and answer questions based on the story.
- Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters, and that words are separated by spaces in print.
- Break compound words into syllables.
- Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds.
- Recognize and produce rhyming words.
- Identify all the letters of the alphabet and their sounds, as well as some digraphs.
- Read common high-frequency words by sight.
- Blend and segment the three sounds in consonant-verb-consonant (CVC) words.
- Create and read simple sentences built with word cards.
- Copy patterns, words, and letters.
- Attempt to write letters and read their own writing.
- Begin to form lowercase letters correctly.

Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support multiple skills, including early literacy skills:

- Read aloud daily to children to ensure vocabulary growth and development. Encourage children to look at the pages of the book as you do so, and to recognize letters and simple CVC words.
- Point out the initial sounds and letters of some of the words when reading a story, e.g., the name of the character or the title of the book. Also discuss the events in the story, the illustrations, and the beginning, middle, and end.
- Encourage children to arrange a set of pictures (from a picture book or even a magazine) in such a way that they form a story. Then they tell their story.
- Use the Pocket Chart to build simple sentences with word cards and pictures.

Activities to promote and support vocabulary development and phonemic awareness:

- Ask questions to reinforce vocabulary and promote sound awareness, e.g., *What rhymes with (ball)? What letter does it start with? What do you do with a ball?*
- Say nursery rhymes, sing, and play rhyming games, focusing on words that sound alike. Make up new rhymes.
- Orally sound out and blend all CVC words at every opportunity, e.g., *M-e-g - Meg.*
- Call out individual multisyllabic words and get children to break the words down into syllables, e.g., *e-le-phant.*
- Collect labels from cereal boxes and familiar logos. Ask: *What do you think this means?*
- Make picture/word signs for places and objects. e.g. *table, chair, book corner, and wash hands.*
- Use children's name labels as part of a matching activity: Place all the names with the same sounds together, read the name, and ask: *Who is it? What sound do you hear? Can you think of anything else that begins with the same sound?*
- Use the time children have to stand in a line and wait, to promote language (phonemic) awareness: *If your name begins with the sound /m/, you may line up; if your name begins with the sound /p/... and so on.*

Activities to promote and support multiple skills, including early writing skills:

- Provide access to equipment such as play dough, finger paints, and pegboards that help develop fine motor skills, which are vital for writing control.
- Encourage children to use a variety of media to explore early writing, e.g., with chalk, paintbrushes dipped in water, sand in a tray, or crayons. They can use these to practice writing letters and forming words.
- Encourage children to "write" their news; they can write it themselves and then read the writing out loud. At this stage, write the correct spelling above the emerging writing.

Ideas for reading to the class:

- Sit the class around you on the carpet in a semi-circle so all the children can see you.
- Have the book you're reading from open facing the children so they can see the words and pictures. Point to the corresponding pictures as you read.
- Trace your finger under the words as you read them.
- Use different expressions in your voice, give the story characters funny voices, and add sound effects.
- Perform actions to the story and encourage the children to copy you.
- Stop at different points in the story and ask questions, e.g., *Was that funny? What's this? What happens next?*
- Read individually with children if you have the time and resources to allow this. When you read individually with children: Sit at their level; trace the sentences with your finger as you read; and encourage the child to read any CVC words; and encourage the child to supply the second rhyme if you are reading poems or rhymes.

Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child struggles to hear the differences between sounds:

The following are fun suggestions targeting a specific perceptual area and are beneficial for all, not only the children experiencing difficulties.

- Make sure the child is able to differentiate between various environmental sounds such as car horn, dogs barking, water running, and so on.
- Call out two words and ask the child if the words rhyme or not, e.g. *big/dig; net/ten*.
- Call out a word and ask the child to name a rhyming word, e.g., *frog (dog, log, fog)*.
- Call out a list of three to four words and have the child name the one that doesn't rhyme, e.g., *tree, free, five, sea*.
- Call out three to four words that begin with the same initial sound and ask the child to name that sound, for example, **m**an, **m**ouse, **m**elon.

When a child struggles to clap out syllables in longer words:

- Begin by getting children to clap out their names, for example, *I-sa-bel* (three claps).
- Move on to words around the classroom: *ta-ble, win-dow*.
- Call out a word already broken into its syllables and ask the child to say what it is, e.g., *Pan-cake – what did you hear? Hel-i-cop-ter – what did you hear?*
- Call out a whole word and ask the child to count the syllables.
- Ask children to isolate a syllable, e.g., *Say birthday. Now say it again without birth.*
- Ask: *What is left when you don't say the cup in cupcake?*

Description

This area of development includes all physical actions, such as gross and fine motor skills, that we can do with our bodies.

Young children learn best through physical movement and then through interacting with concrete materials before engaging with paper and pencil activities. Therefore, it is vital that young children get as many opportunities as possible to safely play in and explore their environment.

Within this area we also emphasize health and safety awareness, especially with regard to age-appropriate equipment and movements for the child.

Fine motor skills include control and coordination of the wrist, hand, and fingers. Hand-eye coordination is also needed for many fine motor tasks.

Developing these skills allows children to explore things in their environment, dress themselves, use writing tools, build puzzles, arrange blocks in sequence, and many more activities.



Measurable Skills

Physical Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of physical development, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following:

Gross motor skills:

- Coordinate their movements to throw, catch, kick, and bounce a ball.
- Use a slide and a swing without being helped or pushed.
- Show proficiency, control, and balance in activities such as walking, climbing, running, jumping, hopping, skipping, marching, and galloping.
- Participate in directionality activities such as moving their body from left to right and from top to bottom.
- Cross the midline, for example, take their right hand across the midline to touch their left shoulder.



Fine motor skills:

- Demonstrate good hand-eye coordination by activities such as building with blocks, copying shapes and patterns, stringing beads, or screwing lids on jars.
- Use scissors correctly and with control to cut out wavy lines and shapes.
- Use writing, drawing, and art tools, including pencils, markers, chalk, or paint brushes.
- Manipulate clay and use it to make simple models.
- Hold crayons correctly, showing a preference for using a particular hand.
- Hold a pencil correctly with a mature grip.
- Complete 24- or 36-piece puzzles.
- Button up their own clothes.
- Wash their hands correctly.

Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support the development of gross motor skills:

- Provide exposure to a wide variety of appropriate small and large equipment that meets safety regulations and standards. This equipment should provide children with opportunities to extend their skills in running, hopping, jumping, climbing, balancing, throwing, and catching.
- Plan play activities carefully so children's interest is sustained, challenge is offered, and activities are balanced to provide for individual needs and abilities.
- Use nursery rhymes, action chants, songs, and marches to help children learn to move to a steady beat and memorize routines.
- Ask children to imitate your body movements. Move as slowly as needed for children to achieve success. At first, model the movement and use verbal directions. Later, just model or just give verbal directions. Gradually make the task more challenging by changing the speed, tempo, rhythm, or directions.
- Provide opportunities, where possible, for children to experience obstacle courses in order to understand their bodies in space and direction.

Activities to promote and support the development of fine motor skills:

- Provide a variety of items for children to explore and manipulate, e.g., pegs and pegboards, beads, threading cards, jigsaw puzzles, and board games.
- Focus on developing fine motor skills during the creative activities you do with the children, for example, painting by dabbing small balls of cotton on paper or using rice, beans, or beads to create a collage.
- Encourage children to cut out pictures from magazines to create a picture collage.
- Allow and encourage children to dress themselves and fasten their own coats and shoes.



Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child struggles to cross the midline:

- Trace large “lazy eights” in the air several times with one hand, and have children copy you. Then repeat with the other hand. The smooth flowing movement crosses over the body’s midline. Have the children track their hands with their eyes, which also aids visual tracking and hand-eye coordination skills.
- Sit children in a long row or in a circle, side by side. They then pass a large ball along the row / around the circle from the friend on their left to the one on their right.

When a child struggles to attain correct pencil grip:

- A mature three-finger pencil grip uses the thumb, index, and middle fingers. When children struggle to hold a pencil correctly, begin with demonstrating the correct placement of the fingers.
- There are also many tripod grips that can be placed onto a pencil to encourage correct grip. Alternatively, there are triangular shaped pencils and crayons that are also designed to encourage correct grip.
- Do exercises with these three fingers, for example, have children pick up beads with the three fingers and place them in a cup, and stretch and flex the fingers.
- Provide children with clay and have them create a pinch pot in the clay using only those three fingers. They can also then create small balls of clay to place in the pot.
- Have children crumple small pieces of tissue paper to make balls. These can be used to decorate pictures.



When a child struggles to cut correctly:

- Managing to use a pair of scissors correctly is an essential skill. It is, in fact, a prehandwriting skill, as it also encourages correct pencil grip due to the use of the three fingers. Begin by making sure the child is holding the scissors correctly — with the thumb through one hole and the index finger through the other hole, and the middle finger resting on the outside of the scissors.
- Have the child roll clay into a long snake and then snip it up into smaller pieces.
- Cut narrow strips of colored paper and get the child to snip across the width. In this way, they learn the grasp-release motion of scissor cutting.
- Draw solid straight lines on a sheet of paper and get the child to cut along them. Then make the lines wavy.
- Finally progress to cutting out circles.

Description

Mathematics is a subject that makes use of symbols and notations for describing numerical, geometric, and graphical relationships. It is not just about numbers; it covers many other concepts, such as measuring, comparing, spatial awareness, and awareness of size and patterns. It helps develop mental processes that enhance life skills, such as logical and critical thinking, accuracy, making predictions, problem-solving, and decision-making.

Rhymes, stories, songs, seasonal events, birthdays, daily routines, and incidental occurrences in the course of the day also help children develop mathematical concepts.



Measurable Skills

Mathematical Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of math, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following.

- Count to 100. Count in 1s, 5s, and 10s.
- Understand one-to-one correspondence.
- Know number symbols 1 to 100.
- Solve addition and subtraction problems up to 20.
- Distinguish between *more*, *less*, and *equal*, and *many* and *few* up to 20.
- Identify patterns in the environment.
- Copy, extend, and create their own patterns using shape, number, and color.
- Understand *in front of*, *behind*; *on top of*, *on*, *under*, *below*; *in*, *out*; *up*, *down*; and be able to verbalize the position of two or more objects in relation to themselves.
- Recognize and name the following 2D shapes: circle, square, triangle, rectangle, diamond, oval, and star.
- Use words like *day* and *night*, *light* and *dark*, *morning*, *afternoon*, and *tonight* to describe the time of day.
- Show an awareness of days of the week, seasons, and weather.
- Know their own age and birthday date.
- Complete basic symmetrical pictures.
- Collect and sort object according to one attribute.

Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support mathematical thought:

- Count and name numbers: counting by rote, counting objects, recognizing numerals.
- Play rhyming games with numbers.
- Provide children with concrete apparatus to help them solve a mathematical problem.
- Provide activities in which children can compare objects in terms of size, length, weight, and height.
- Take advantage of real-life opportunities to sort objects; for example: crayons into color, books into size or type, toys into categories.
- Focus children's attention on patterns in the daily routine (songs, rhymes, artwork) and in the environment (plants, trees, clouds, birds, animals).
- Allow children to explore their environment and use vocabulary that relates to their own or an object's position in the space: *up, down, above, under, behind, in front*.
- Provide puzzles with varying degrees of difficulty.
- Help to identify, name, and compare shapes through games, books, and objects in the environment.
- Explore properties of regular and irregular shapes. For example: how many sides or corners, which shapes can roll, which can be stacked one on top of the other.
- Provide building materials and ask about balance, strength, and design of structures.



Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child struggles to associate the visual number symbol with the auditory symbol:

This occurs when a child is able to count out loud, in a correct sequence, but is then unable to recognize the relevant visual symbol (for example *five* and 5). Here are some ideas to help.

- When working with numbers, always verbalize the number while pointing to the symbol. This helps children associate the word and the visual symbol.
- Have number cards and ask learners to sequence them, and then have them verbalize each number.
- Hold up a flashcard and have the child say what he has seen.
- Make use of number charts or number lines. Call out a sequence and have the child find that sequence on the chart. For example, 12, 13, 14, 15...
- Ask the child to cover the numbers with a counter or bead. Gradually extend the numbers in the sequence. This activity will also help with auditory memory.
- Use playing cards and buttons and ask the child to place the appropriate number of buttons on the hearts, spades, clubs, or diamonds on each card.
- Place number cards on the floor, and attach a paper clip to each card. Attach a magnet to a string. Call out a number and have the child “fish” for that card using the magnet.
- Write numerals in the sections of an ice cube tray or a muffin tin. Have the child look at the number and place the appropriate number of buttons or beads in each section.

When a child struggles to count with understanding:

Sometimes children are able to count up to a certain number, and then they begin to omit numbers or mess up the sequence. This often happens when moving onto a new ten, for example, 39, 40 or 49, 50. Problems can also occur when children count backward or in groups. Here are some ideas to try with an individual child, a small group, or even a whole class.

- Count, count, and count! Provide children with tons of counting experiences: Count crayons, socks, books, heads, ears, arms, and so on.
- Use number charts or lines and ask children to find a certain number. What comes before, and what comes after? What is two more, four more, five less, and so on?
- Write numbers in sequence on the playground using chalk. Children hop from one number to another, calling it out. They then hop back and count backward. They can also do number patterns, e.g., count in 2s and 5s.



Description

This area of development focuses on how we think, learn, and problem solve. It also focuses on how we retain learned information or knowledge acquired. Through cognitive development, children learn to observe, discover new things, note similarities and differences, solve problems, and ask questions — in other words, grow and exercise their thinking skills.

There is a certain amount of overlap between Cognitive Development, Language Development, and Mathematical Development. In order to gain language and mathematical skills, a child needs adequately developed cognitive skills, too. Cognitive Development is also explored through cross-curricular links to Science.

The cognitive skills that children gain from everyday experiences are what help children acquire new knowledge and information. The best environment for learning is created when children have multiple and varied opportunities to interact with their environment and are encouraged to learn from these experiences.

Children's cognitive development is boosted when they develop skills for keeping track of their own thinking processes. These skills help children to think through what to do, and to know whether they are succeeding or when to ask for help. Thinking about their own thinking helps children become more independent learners.



Measurable Skills

Cognitive Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of cognitive development, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following.

- Pay attention for around 15–20 minutes to adult-directed tasks, and stay with an activity to completion.
- Demonstrate a broad understanding of the world in which they live, including their homes, food, bodies.
- Absorb and retain new knowledge.
- Make links to their own experience when reading with the teacher.
- Show an interest in exploring their environment and learning more about nature and science (plants, animals, weather).
- Participate in simple experiments to learn about science, and notice and think about the results.
- Use reflective thinking to consider why things happen and what can be learned from these experiences.
- Express an opinion in matters that affect them.
- Make simple decisions on their own, for example, deciding what clothes to wear.
- Use their senses to explore the immediate inside and outside environment.
- Be interested and show a willingness to solve problems.
- Participate with others to solve problems and contribute to group outcomes.
- Sort and classify objects according to one or more properties.
- Match things that go together and compare things that are different, using appropriate language.

Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support Cognitive Development

- Encourage and praise children and build their confidence to keep on trying and learning new things.
- Praise and acknowledge children's attempts and not just their successes.
- Provide "scaffolding" for children's learning. Do this by asking questions, giving children hints and prompts, or showing them how (but not what) to do.
- Provide opportunities for children to investigate ideas and complex concepts. Free-play situations create endless opportunities for children to identify and solve problems. Plan learning environments with appropriate levels of challenge where children are encouraged to explore, experiment, investigate, and solve problems.
- Encourage children to use language and drawings to describe and explain their ideas.
- Reinforce children's solutions; let them know that their ideas and efforts are valued.
- Ask open-ended questions about activities to help children see the problem they are trying to solve in new and different ways.



Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child struggles with critical thinking:

Critical thinking is the ability to mentally break down a problem or an idea into parts and analyze them. Sorting, classifying, and comparing similarities and differences are all a part of this important skill. Critical thinking can also be called problem solving or logical thinking. The premise behind critical thinking is that when you break larger problems into smaller parts, they become easier to understand and to solve.

- Begin by providing an environment that encourages the child to explore and investigate. Create spaces of interest, such as fantasy corner, experiment table, puzzle area, and so on. Make sure these areas are regularly changed so children are motivated to visit again and again.
- Avoid rushing in to solve the child's problem. Rather, encourage the practice of critical and logical thinking by asking open-ended questions, such as *How have you built this tower? How are the blocks fitting together? How would the building be different if you used blocks that were all the same size?* Similarly, turn children's questions back to them, e.g., answer a *Why...?* question with *Why do you think...?*
- Invite children to brainstorm ideas about a certain topic. For example, if there is a discussion about insects, then ask children to think of all the different insects they know. Ask them to describe each one a little.
- Offer verbal support: *Look at all the different ways you're trying to make that piece fit in your puzzle. You're working hard to figure it out, aren't you?* At times, nonverbal support may be all that's needed — a smile or an understanding nod can show support and encourage children to continue in their thinking process.

Verbal games to develop reasoning and thinking skills:

Guess What?

Provide verbal clues and have children figure out the answer. For example: *Guess what has four feet and a long nose?*

Inventory Questions

Ask questions of daily events or activities that will test recall and short-term memory. For example: *What did you have for breakfast yesterday?*

Yes or No?

Call out statements and have children answer with either Yes or No. This game checks general knowledge about their world. For example: *The sky is yellow — yes or no?* You can ask a child to call out a statement and have the rest of the class answer.

Which One Doesn't Belong, and Why?

This game tests auditory memory as well as logical thinking. Call out a group of objects, including one that doesn't belong to the group, for example, *newspaper, book, computer, or birthday card*? Children then say which one doesn't belong and why. There can be more than one correct response — no response is incorrect as long as the children can explain it.

Categories

This game encourages children to categorize a group of objects. For example: *Sock...shoe...shirt... What group do they all belong to?* (Clothes.) Or you can do the reverse game where you name the category, and the child thinks of as many items that fit.

What Comes Next?

Create a pattern with words. Children listen and then continue the pattern. For example, *tree, flower, flower, tree, flower, flower...* This encourages auditory memory as well as sequencing.



Description

Preschool children love to express themselves and their ideas using crayons, paints, clay, scissors, glue and paper, musical instruments, and songs.

They will begin making basic shapes, and might enjoy experimenting with texture, space, and colors in pieces of art. For example, preschoolers often draw houses with shining suns above them — this is because this picture is made up of very basic shapes, including a square house, triangular roof, and a circular sun.

As children develop, their artworks contain more and more detail in line with language acquisition and knowledge of the world. Drawings of people are usually basic figures to begin with. Realistic shape, scale, and other details come a little later.

Drawing and doodling allow young children to express emotions, experience autonomy, and build confidence. The creation of a drawing involves all of the child's past and present experiences and gives the child a way to document his or her thoughts. For young children, it engages the mind and, when used in a communicative and collaborative manner, helps them understand and define words, make cognitive connections between different objects, and develop greater narrative and communication skills.



Measurable Skills

Creative Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of creative development, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following.

- Represent their ideas, thoughts, and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role-play, and stories.
- Use and explore a variety of materials, tools, and techniques to express themselves, experimenting with color, design, texture, form, and function.
- Use their knowledge of media and materials in original ways, thinking about uses and purposes.
- Draw pictures of key vocabulary items into scenes.
- Identify and complete drawings with missing elements.
- Draw pictures of themselves and their friends in imaginary situations.
- Draw pictures to illustrate sentences they have written, or to illustrate steps in a simple recipe, shopping list, or other type of plan.
- Use a combination of drawing, word cards, and writing to construct simple sentences.
- Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail.
- Create and extend their own patterns using shape and color.
- Work with others to create collaborative art and craft projects.
- Sing songs, make music, and dance.
- Experiment with ways of changing songs, for example inventing new verses.
- Invent, adapt, and act out simple role-plays.

Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support creative development:

You don't always need to have lots of new play materials. Using everyday objects and making it up as you go along is a great way to encourage creative development.

- Use an empty cardboard box to make a house, a robot, a truck, an animal — whatever the children decide, or whatever fits your topic. You could cut up the box, glue things onto it, or paint it.
- Glue ribbons and strips of material onto paper or cardboard.
- Do papier maché using just old newspaper, glue, and water. You could cover balloons with papier mâché to make head shapes, or cut them in half to make masks. The children can paint them when they are dry.
- Use empty toilet rolls or small plastic juice bottles to make a family. Draw on faces, stick on paper clothes, and use cotton wool for hair. The children can use these new toys to make up or act out stories.
- Make use of natural materials and things you or the children find. For example, in the fall, collect fallen leaves for drawing, pasting onto paper, or dipping into paint.
- Use small plastic lids, shells, pasta, and other items to make jewelry.
- Keep a busy box in the classroom with things like yarn and paper, empty food containers, and plastic cups, which the children can use in crafts.



Activities to promote music, movement, and dance:

- Encourage children to make music with what's around them, e.g., shakers, using their pencils to tap on the desk, and using their hands and feet to beat rhythms.
- Encourage the children to move like animals and make animal sounds. Nothing appeals to a preschooler like animals!
- Put on your, or the children's, favorite music. Start dancing together, and see how many moves you can come up with. It's not only fun — it's good exercise, too.
- Encourage the children to march, stamp, hop, slide, and twirl. Watching the children progress with jumping and dancing can tell you how your child's body awareness and control are developing.
- Help the children develop a sense of rhythm with songs, chants, and rhymes like *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, *Head and Shoulders*, and *Five Little Monkeys*.
- Include some fun or laughter to appeal to the children's sense of humor. Joke around and take turns coming up with new, funny dances.

Creative play idea: Let's make music!

- You'll need some homemade and/or bought instruments. Homemade instruments can include saucepans, spoons, drums, bottles filled with rice, pasta, or sugar, paper plates with metal curtain rings, or bottle tops attached around the edge.
- Lay the instruments on the floor and play them loudly (like an elephant), softly (like a mouse), quickly (like a cat), and slowly (like a tortoise). Encourage the children to copy the way you played the instruments.
- Let them experiment with playing instruments loudly, softly, quickly and slowly. Make up stories to go with the sounds.

Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child doesn't like getting messy:

- Monitor children who avoid messy activities and don't like getting dirty, and encourage them to participate in arts and crafts activities by providing aprons and acknowledging their anxieties. Say, e.g., *Don't worry about getting paint on your hands. Remember, we can wash them afterward.*
- Don't compare them to other children who do like messy play. If you compare one child to another, you send the message that there is something wrong with one child. But there is nothing wrong with children who do not want to engage in messy play. Allow the children who enjoy getting messy with paint and glue to get started and maybe the others will join in.
- Make it feel fun and natural. Introduce activities that might be messy as arts and crafts projects rather than messy play.
- Offer alternatives when doing art projects to exploit children's natural preferences. Children who like to get messy can do finger and hand printing, those who don't can use a sponge or a brush.

When a child struggles to follow a musical rhythm:

- Most children have an innate and natural sense of rhythm, but some will find following a beat more challenging.
- Slow the beat down. Continue at a slow pace until the child is confident, then pick up the tempo very slowly.
- Encourage the children to keep rhythm with whole body movements; rather than tap or clap, they can jump.
- Play music with a strong beat for the children to try and follow. No one will know or hear if anyone has lost the rhythm, and copying other children will help them pick it back up again.



Description

Children carry with them a variety of personal and social skills, values, and attitudes. These they have acquired from relationships and experiences within the home and the immediate environment. It is important that these should be recognized and fostered. Children are individuals in their own right and have their own personalities.

Young children need time for relationships to develop. Being aware that they are valued as individuals enhances children's self-esteem and makes it easier for them to form relationships and develop friendships.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) describes the process through which children develop the skills needed to become well-rounded, confident individuals. SEL gives children the tools to manage emotions and build positive relationships with others. Research shows that when children are equipped with social and emotional skills they are better able to learn, have fewer behavioral issues, and have more confident relationships with their teacher and classmates.

Socioemotional development also helps to set the foundation for Education for Sustainable Development and Citizenship (ESDC). ESDC teaches children the values of citizenship, defining the role of individuals in larger communities. ESDC helps children transition from self-knowledge, to understanding that they are part of a larger whole (their family, school, and the wider world). It also helps them develop the attitudes and skills to become positive and active participants of the world.



Measurable Skills

Socioemotional Readiness

To deem a child ready for school in terms of socioemotional development, he or she should be able to do some or all of the following.

- Participate in play with other children, and approach them in a positive way in order to make new friends.
- Express their individual needs and wants verbally.
- Take turns and share with others.
- Cope well with transitions and changes.
- Understand and respect rules.
- Recognize and manage their emotions in appropriate ways.
- Assert their capabilities and independence, while demonstrating awareness of the needs and rights of others.
- Demonstrate an ability to persevere, especially when a task is difficult, and enjoy the satisfaction of achievement.
- Give and receive affection and appreciation.
- Deal with conflict in an appropriate manner.
- Reassure friends when they are upset.
- Understand and follow good hygiene practices, (e.g., going to the bathroom alone, washing their hands correctly, or covering their mouth when coughing).
- Enjoy imaginative play.
- Be curious and enthusiastic to learn.

Activity Ideas

Activities to promote and support personal development:

- Praise children's efforts and their progress, not just the results of their work. This helps to ensure that all children experience pride in their attempts and achievements.
- Do activities as a whole class to promote children's sense of belonging, connectedness, and well-being.
- Challenge and support children to engage in and persevere at tasks and play.
- Value children's personal decision-making.
- Listen carefully to children's ideas and discuss with them how these ideas might be developed.
- Model good health and safety practices, especially good hand washing techniques.
- Place tissues, soap, paper towels, and other personal hygiene items within children's reach so they can care for their own needs without adult assistance.

Activities to promote and support social development:

- Mediate and assist children in negotiating their rights in relation to the rights of others.
- Facilitate play activities where children learn to:
 - Cooperate, e.g., in block play when they build together.
 - Take turns, e.g., when a new toy is provided.
 - Learn to share, e.g., in sand play where they share shovels and other equipment.
 - Explore the diversity of cultures and social identities.

Activities to promote and support emotional development:

- Talk with children about their emotions. Ask them how they feel.
- Provide lessons and activities where children are encouraged to express emotion, develop self confidence, extend their imagination, identify with different characters, and take part in group situations as they sing, play music, and dance.
- Promote in children a strong sense of who they are and their shared identity with the rest of the class.



Additional Support Ideas

The following are support ideas to help with some common specific problem areas.

When a child struggles to make friends:

When friends don't come easily, some children get discouraged, and their excitement about school can turn into anxiety. Begin by observing the child during free-play activities, outdoor play, and any other activity in which they work with or socialize with other children. What do they do? Do they approach another child or just watch? When someone approaches them, how do they react? Can they play with another child for an extended period of time or for just a little while? What happens? Are they able to share? Once there are observation records, there is a clearer idea as to what is going wrong and strategy can be planned to help the child further. Here are some ideas.

- Do some role-playing with the child. Act out how to approach another child, smile, and ask the child to play.
- Getting them to interact in small groups — or one-on-one — can help substantially. Perhaps pair the child with another whom you feel would be a good personality combination.
- Play games that encourage working with a partner, such as: mirror images — two children sit across from one another, and the one copies every movement the other makes — like a mirror image. Board games work well, too.
- As a class, talk about making friends. Brainstorm what makes a good friend. Talk about the different points and how they can use them to be a good friend.

When a child struggles with a difficult feeling in class:

Children can have a strong emotional reaction in class when they are having a difficult feeling and haven't yet developed the competencies to handle feelings like frustration, sadness or anger, or the strategies to ask for help when they are feeling overwhelmed.

How you respond goes a long way toward managing the situation and helping the child develop SEL competencies and more appropriate coping strategies. Here are some ideas of what to do.

- Keep calm. Don't shout or attempt to use the power of authority to stop the outburst. This may just overwhelm the child more and escalate the situation.
- Keep a predictable routine, and explain if there are changes to the routine so that all children understand what to expect. Before a change of activity, give children a five-minute warning.
- Create a point or award system. This is to help motivate children to follow the routines and behavior rules. But monitor these closely as not all children benefit from these systems.
- Create a safe space in your classroom so that children have a space to calm down away from the other children. Make it a quiet, inviting place; for example, allow a child to use the space to sit quietly looking at books. It may also help to display images of what to do to calm down in that space, or sensory items that help children to self-soothe. Avoid creating the impression that time spent in this space is a punishment or a reward.
- Once a child is calm, make sure to take the time to talk about what happened and why. This discussion is for you to better understand what feelings and thoughts might have sparked the behavior, and to help the child learn appropriate ways to calm down in the classroom and ask for help.

Glossary

Key concepts:

Cognitive: the process of acquiring knowledge by the use of reasoning, intuition, or perception.

Early learning: a process of exploration engaged in from birth as children expand their intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and creative capacities.

Fine motor skills: the ability to use small muscles, for example, picking up small objects, turning pages, or using a crayon to draw.

Gross motor skills: the ability to use large muscles, for example, being able to run and kick a ball or climb a ladder.

Literacy: a range of modes of communication including music, movement, dance, storytelling, visual arts, media, and drama; as well as talking, reading, and writing.

Numeracy: understandings about numbers, patterns, measurement, spatial awareness, and data, as well as mathematical thinking, reasoning, and counting.

Perceptual skills: perception means using the senses to acquire information about the surroundings, environment, or situation. The development of perceptual skills potentially occurs during all learning, and these are the foundation for all future development and learning.

Scaffold: the educators' decisions and actions that build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning.

Stages of development: different stages through which young children progress. Progression occurs sequentially. When success is achieved in one stage, children move on to the next.

Transitions: the process of moving between home and childhood setting, between a range of different early childhood settings, or from childhood setting to formal school.

Word-attack skills: the ability to convert symbols (letters) to language.

Key perceptual skills:

Auditory discrimination: the ability to hear similarities and differences in sounds.

Auditory memory: the ability to remember what the ears have heard and the correct sequence in which sounds have been perceived.

Auditory perception: acquiring and interpreting information through the ears. Accurate auditory perception enables the learner to give meaning to what is heard.

Body image: a complete awareness of one's own body, how it moves, and how it functions.

Crossing the mid-line: being able to work across the vertical mid-line of the body, for example, draw a line from one side of the page to the other without changing the tool from one hand to the other.

Dominance: preferring to use one hand or side of the body, either right or left dominant.

Figure-ground perception: being able to focus attention on a specific object or aspect while ignoring all other stimuli, for example, read one word in a sentence.

Form perception: the ability to recognize forms, shapes, symbols, or letters regardless of position, size, or background; for example, name a triangle even when it is pointing in different directions.

Hand-eye coordination: the hands and eyes working together when performing a movement, for example, catching a ball.

Spatial orientation: the ability to understand the space around the body, or the relationship between the object and the observer, for example, *The hat is on my head.*

Visual perception: acquiring and interpreting information through the eyes. Accurate visual perception enables the learner to read, write, and do mathematics.

Visual discrimination: the ability to see similarities, differences, and details of objects accurately.

Visual memory: the ability to remember what the eyes have seen and the correct sequence in which things have been perceived.