



Helping children aged 2 to 4 to learn at home

No one expects parents to act as teachers or childcare providers or to be able to provide all the activities that a playgroup and pre-school might. While children gain a lot from nursery, things that parents and carers do at home have a great impact on their development too.

How to help young children learn at home

You can help your child to learn through the little things you do with them, for example:

- everyday conversations
- make-believe play
- games with numbers or letters
- reading together
- involving them in the things you are doing, such as cooking; household chores and talking with them about what you are doing

You do not need to set separate time or plan complicated activities dedicated to learning. These activities can be built into everyday life and play.

You know your child best. Avoid forcing them into lengthy planned activities if they naturally respond better to a mix of shorter activities. This can stop them getting bored or frustrated and keep them active, interested and learning through things they enjoy.

Keeping a routine

Do not worry about trying to keep to the full routine that your child has in nursery or with their childcare provider. However, children will feel more comfortable with a predictable routine, so try to make sure they:

- get up and go to bed at the same time each day
- have regular meal times
- turn off any electronic devices, including the television, at least an hour before bedtime

Keeping active

Young children should be active for at least 3 hours a day in total. It's also good to get some fresh air every day.

While inside, there are plenty of things you can do to keep children active, such as:

- playing hide-and-seek
- seeing who can do the most star jumps
- making an obstacle course
- playing music and having a 'dance-off'

Television and digital devices

There are lots of ways to help your child to learn such as reading together and make-believe play. You can also use what they have watched on television or the internet to help their learning. Talk with them about what they are watching or use their favourite television characters in other games and activities.

Digital devices such as a laptops, tablets or smartphones can also help children learn. If your child does use them, try downloading some apps that will help them learn.

Choosing an app for your child – the FEED test

There are lots of apps that say they are 'educational', but you'll want to reassure yourself that's the case and that they are right for your child. The FEED check may help.

- **Fun** – Will your child enjoy the app? Will it keep their attention?
- **Educational** – Is there a clear educational aim? Do you know what your child will learn? Will it keep them learning and allow them to progress?
- **Engaging** – Will it help your child if they get stuck? Will it give them feedback and let them know when they've got challenges right?
- **Design** – Is it attractive and easy to use? Is it inclusive? Can an adult change the settings? Is it safe, with links to the internet and adverts protected behind a parental gate?

Find more information on how to support your child's learning through apps and get advice on screen time: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-apps-pilot-home-learning-environment/home-learning-environment-early-years-apps-parent-guidance>

Set age-appropriate parental controls on any devices young children are using and supervise their use of websites and apps. See advice on keeping them safe online at <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/keeping-your-under-five-safe-online>

Try sharing things your child makes with your friends and family online and encourage others to do the same. Your child might enjoy seeing things they have made on the screen or seeing what other children have done.

Socialising while self-isolating

Spending time with other children is important for your child's development, but now it is important to follow the rules on social distancing if you are self-isolating

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

If you are at home self-isolating and spending more time at home together, it will help them if everyone in the home talks with your child through the day, responding to them and being led by the things they are interested in.

If you can, try a video call with other children. Younger children may not have a conversation as you would, but they can share activities or show each other things they have made or like.

- Try a call with other people that your child knows, such as grandparents.
- Sit and do the call with them to help. If your child does not like it try again another time, or have a call with family members while you are sitting down and eating a meal.

Try sitting with your child and looking at pictures of their friends or family. Talk about them and the things you have done together.

Above all else, do not put too much pressure on yourself – you are doing an amazing job!