

PRE-LEARNING

IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Play today, ready for tomorrow!

Fun, play-based ideas and games that build the skills children need before formal learning.

1. SPEAKING & LISTENING

(Communication First!)



"What's in the bag?"

- Barrier games
- Storytelling circle
- Role play areas (shop, home, café)

Focus: vocabulary, sentence building, listening, turn-taking

2. LISTENING & ATTENTION GAMES



- "Simon Says"
- Sound lotto (match sounds)
- Copy my clap/tap pattern
- Musical statues

Builds: focus, memory, following instructions

3. EARLY PHONICS

(Pre-reading skills)



- Sound hunts (find /s/, /b/, etc.)
- Rhyming pairs game
- Robot talking (c-a-t → cat)
- Alliteration games ("Silly Sam slithers")

Focus: hearing sounds before seeing letters

4. FINE MOTOR SKILLS


(Pre-writing)



- Dough disco / playdough
- Threading beads / pasta necklaces
- Peg boards and tweezers games
- Tracing in sand, foam or shaving cream
- Painting with water outside

Builds hand strength and control for writing

5. EARLY MATHS THROUGH PLAY



- Counting treasure hunts
- "Give me 5" games
- Sorting objects (colour, size, shape)
- Building towers and comparing height
- Number songs (e.g. "5 Little Ducks")

Focus: counting, sorting, comparing, pattern

6. GROSS MOTOR & PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT



- Obstacle courses (crawl, jump, balance)
- Beanbag throwing targets
- Dancing with scarves/ribbons
- Balance games (walk the line)

Builds: coordination, balance and body control

7. INDEPENDENCE & SELF-HELP



- Dress-up challenges (zips, buttons)
- Snack station routines (pouring, tidying)
- "Tidy-up races"
- Visual routine cards

Focus: independence, responsibility, confidence


8. SOCIAL SKILLS & TURN-TAKING



- Board games with simple rules
- "Pass the smile" circle game
- Partner tasks (build together)
- Sharing games with limited resources

Builds cooperation, patience and friendships

9. CURIOSITY & EXPLORATION



- Loose parts play (sticks, stones, shells)
- Water play (pouring, measuring)
- Nature hunts
- "What will happen if...?" experiments

Encourages thinking, questioning, problem-solving

KEY PRINCIPLES

Play-based, not worksheet-based

Talk is everything

Repetition builds confidence

Adult modelling matters

Follow children's interests

BIG IDEA
Pre-learning is not about "getting ahead". It's about building the skills that make learning possible.