

Space to Grow: Learning Spaces

Resource Guide

Space to Grow Learning Spaces are designed to help children and young people to engage with learning which has been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and to improve their psychosocial wellbeing. The aim is to provide a safe and supportive learning space where children can develop coping skills, grow in confidence and receive support with independent learning. This will equip children to make an easier transition back to schools once they reopen.

Learning Spaces can take place in COVID-secure community centres, church buildings or other community spaces, and are open out of school hours. Learning mentors work with small groups of children and offer psychosocial and learning support.

This **Resource Guide** has been produced to support you to plan activities during your Learning Space sessions. Many of the activities and ideas included in this resource guide have been produced by other organisations, with links provided in the manual; some activities have been adapted or developed originally.¹

This resource guide includes activities to help you plan for the sessions, according to the session outline template given on page 18 of the **Space to Grow: Learning Spaces Handbook for Co-ordinators and Learning Mentors** which you should also have access to.

Psychosocial support	p.3
Targeted Psychosocial Support activities in the Learning Space	p.3
Learning breaks	p.10
Activities to support children's learning	p.12
Literacy Learning Activities and Games	p.16
Numeracy Learning Activities and Games	p.18
Learning Outdoors	p.21
Collaborative learning activities	p.23
Activities to end each Learning Space session	p.26
Additional Resources and useful links	p.27

¹ Some activities were developed in partnership with **Food for the Hungry** as part of a shared project developing a Psychosocial Support training curriculum for teachers. Other activities are taken from Viva's **Flourish** life skills training for adolescents.

Targeted Psychosocial Support Activities in the Learning Space

Theme 1: Understanding what has happened and being able to think positively about the future

Time to talk: Talk about what's happened



There is a common misconception that talking about the traumatic event can cause more problems, or lead a child to develop distress reactions. Although it is important to consider how you talk to the young person who has experienced trauma (and what sort of reactions and coping strategies you model), talking about the traumatic event and the child's feelings does not generally lead the child to develop problems. Tips for talking to children about the pandemic:

- Place rules around 'pandemic talk' to limit potential modelling of distress and inappropriate coping mechanisms (e.g. set 10 minutes at the start of the session for talking about the disaster).
- Contain any conversations which encourage fear. Remain calm and convey a clear message on what we can do to keep ourselves safe.
- Schedule these sessions when you have some extra support in the Learning Space.
- It is very important for mentors to maintain the 'mentor' role as they support the child. Remember you can draw on other supports if you feel a child needs extra support.
- Focus on positive changes, as well as the strengths and positive coping strategies the child has demonstrated since the pandemic.
- For younger children, talking about the event may be difficult. Some children might respond better to drawing or playing games as a way of communicating.
- For older children, talking can include more complex issues and how they have affected the family.
- Talking can still be a useful exercise for children who have lost loved ones during the pandemic. It is important, however, to be aware of the child's circumstances, where possible, in order to pre-empt and plan for emotional reactions.

These tips are from [Emerging Minds](#)

Group drama activity: What happened to our community?

Aim: To encourage the children to share their experiences through telling the story of what happened to their community as a result of the pandemic, disaster or crisis.

Ask the children to make groups of four or five.

Explain that they will now have about 10 minutes to prepare a silent story that they have to mime to the other groups. It should be about three to five minutes long, telling the story about something that happened to the community as a result of the disaster or pandemic.

After 10 minutes, ask each group to show their silent story. Ask the children who are watching to try to work out what is happening. At the end of each group's story, take some time to talk about what the group did.

Ask questions to stimulate talking, such as:

- What happened? Who did what?
- What were the feelings of the people in the story?
- Was this something that happened everywhere in the community, or only in some places?
- What do you think could be done differently if it happened again?

Complete the activity by asking the questions below:

1. What was it like doing these mimes?
2. What has it made you think about, in terms of your community and the impact of the disaster?

IFRC and Save the Children, The Children's Resilience Programme: Understanding Children's Wellbeing

Letting go and looking forward: Learning Space or homework activity

There are lots of things that we haven't been able to do due to COVID-19 – see friends, hug a grandparent, go shopping or visit a favourite place. This activity sheet helps to encourage children to accept and let go of the things they missed out on due to any pandemic lockdowns, and to look forward to things they can do in the future. This activity works well as a 1:1 activity so you can talk through the child's experiences together.

Things I've missed out on – Letting go	Things I am looking forward to – Future plans
   <p>Talk to the child about things they couldn't do because of COVID-19. They can write or draw each item on a small piece of paper. Ask them how they feel about each thing they've missed. We can't change this situation, so we need to accept that those events are gone for ever. One by one, scrunch up the pieces of paper and throw them away, letting them go for good.</p>	   <p>Encourage children to make a list or draw pictures of things they are looking forward to doing in the near future. Stick this on the classroom wall, or at home, to remind them of good things coming up. They can add new things at any time.</p>

This activity was created by Partnership for Children and can be found here: Partnership for Children, Letting go and looking forward

Theme 2: Expressing feelings and emotions

The Mirror Game

Aim: To stimulate cooperation and concentration and to consider different emotions.

1. Ask the children to stand in two lines.
2. Explain that one line will be mirrors and the other line will be actors.
3. The facilitator and co-facilitator then demonstrate the game. The facilitator calls out a positive emotion, such as strength, courage, bravery, happiness, peacefulness, and the actors act out this emotion.
4. The mirrors try to copy the actor in every detail.
5. Each line takes it in turns to be actor and mirror for each emotion – the facilitator keeps everyone in order! The facilitator calls out the emotion, and also when the actor and mirror should swap.



For online learning, all children can act out the emotions and feelings called out by the teacher at the same time.

Save the Children, (2006) Psycho-Social Structured Activity Program

Feelings Dice

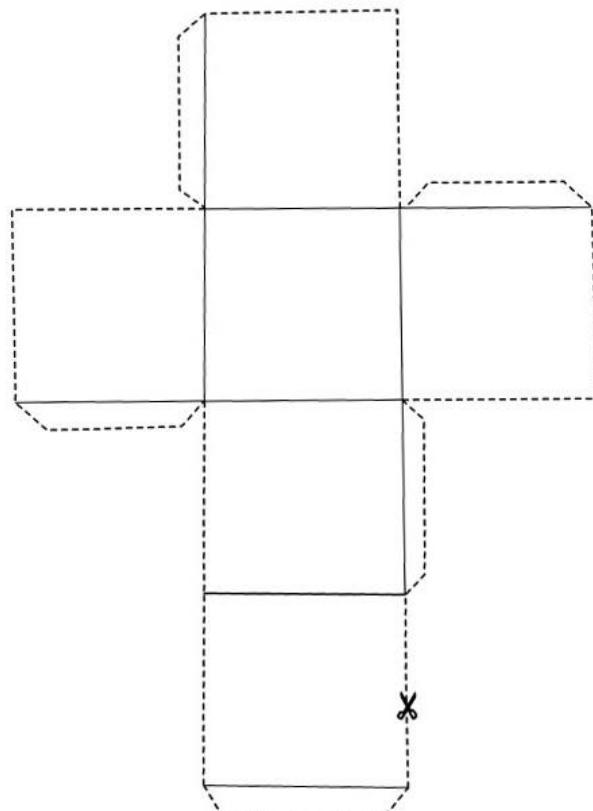
Aim: To help children feel comfortable about their feelings.

You will need: A dice or cube with one feeling or picture of an emotion on each side. Include some positive and some negative feelings, for example: excited, happy, scared, proud, angry, sad. You could also use a regular dice, choosing an emotion to be represented by each number before you begin.

This game is best played in small groups. Each person rolls the dice and shares an example of a time they have felt the emotion shown on the dice. Make sure everyone knows that they can pass if they want to.



Ask: Do we always find it easy to share our feelings? Which ones are more difficult or easy to share?



Talk about the importance of listening to one another and respecting each other's feelings.

Feelings tracker

(For use with individual children)

This simple emotion and activity tracker is designed to help individual children identify emotional trigger points and moments of positivity in their day-to-day life. When a child is feeling heightened emotions, they may

sometimes find it difficult to identify specific causes. They may also struggle to employ coping strategies that work well for them. The child can work with an adult to complete this tracker throughout a day at school, naming and scaling their feelings, and attributing them to events in the day that may have increased either positive or negative emotions. Regular review with an adult will help to identify points of the day that led to positive or negative emotions, and can help pinpoint why this was the case.

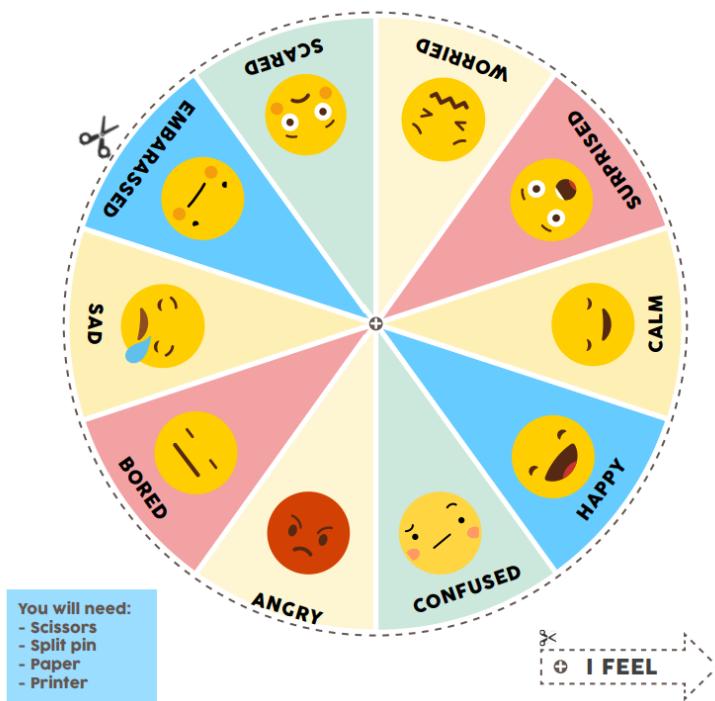
The results can then be used to plan further opportunities for positive moments, identify triggers to avoid, and build a bank of coping strategies for the child.

The Feelings Tracker tool is created by and available at [Mentally Healthy Schools](#)

FEELINGS TRACKER			COMPLETED WITH _____		
			DATES _____		
			NAME _____		
MONDAY			TUESDAY		
ACTIVITY	FEELING	REASON (optional)	ACTIVITY	FEELING	REASON (optional)
1			1		
2			2		
3			3		

Emotions wheel

(For use with individual children)



The emotions wheel can be used with children of all ages who are struggling to express their current feelings. By identifying an image, they can convey their current feelings. Using the wheel regularly throughout the day will help children and young people see the changing nature of their feelings and can help reduce anxiety around feeling a certain way. It could be helpful for this activity to be modelled by adults before use. Make the emotion wheel together, with the adult taking the first turn to identify their own current emotion. They could then discuss this further with the child before their turn.

Children could draw their own wheel of emotions, based on the template above. *The Emotions Wheel is created by and available at [Mentally Healthy Schools](#)*

Theme 3: Building self-esteem and self confidence

My flag

Aim: To enable self-expression and creativity and promote self-worth and confidence.

You will need: Paper or material that can be drawn on or painted on. Art materials for as much creativity as possible, e.g. coloured markers, crayons, pencils, glitter, glue, paint, fabric, scissors, old magazines, etc.



1. Ask the children to sit in small groups, and give each group a range of art materials. Tell the children that everyone is going to make a personal flag. It can be related to their heritage and family, their likes or dislikes, or something they can do that they are proud of.
2. Give them about 15 minutes to create their flags. They can do anything they want to with the paper for the flag – cut it into a flag shape, paint it, colour it with crayons, glue pictures from magazines on it, etc. using any of the art materials. Ask the children to write their names on the back of the flags.
3. When everyone has finished, ask them to sit in a circle and talk about the flags they have created.
4. Now ask the children to help attach the flags to a long piece of string. If you can, hang the flags up in the classroom.

World Vision Creativity with children. A Manual for Children's Activities



For online learning, children can complete the flag at home or during the lesson, and share them on screen; or, they could design a badge to wear.

Superhero me



These printable templates, split up by age, use the concept of superheroes to encourage children to explore their own super powers, qualities and talents. What they create could then be shared with their next teacher as a transition activity, or kept to reflect on their strengths.

The 'Superhero Me' activity is created by and available from [Mentally Healthy Schools](https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/activities/superhero-me/)



For online learning, children can complete the activity at home or during the lesson.

Nobody knows what I can do

Aim: To build self-esteem and confidence by sharing personal information with others. To strengthen group cohesiveness and respect by listening carefully and concentrating on what others are saying.

You will need: Space for two circles.

1. Ask the children to form two circles – an inner circle and an outer circle with the same number of children in each. (If there is an uneven number, the facilitator can join a circle.) Ask them to face each other.
2. Ask the children to take turns in telling the other person something they think that person did not know about them. It should be a positive quality or skill or characteristic.
Give an example: “*Nobody knows that I can sew my own clothes.*”
3. Once the first pair have shared, clap or make another sound to indicate it is time to move: the inner circle stands still, whilst the outer circle moves one person to the right. Keep doing this until everyone in the inner circle has talked with everyone in the outer circle.
4. Now ask the children to sit down in one big circle.
5. Now ask the children to share one thing they learnt about someone else. No repetitions are allowed – every child should be mentioned.
6. When everyone has been mentioned, follow up with the questions below.

How did you feel about talking about a quality or skill that you don't normally share?

Were there some new qualities or skills that you heard about that you would like to learn?

IFRC and Save the Children, Children's Resilience Programme

Theme 4: Cooperation and learning how to have positive relationships with others

The train of silly walks

Aim: To energise the children and to practise working together.

You will need: Space.

1. Ask the children to stand in a circle. Now ask them all to turn to their right.
2. The facilitator breaks the circle so there is a beginning and an end. Now tell the leader of the line to start walking. The person behind them copies the leader exactly. The person behind that person does the same, until everyone in the line is walking in exactly the same way.
3. The train can go anywhere and the leader can change the walk, make noises, wave their arms around and so on, and the rest have to copy the exact movements and sounds.
4. After about 30 seconds, switch and let someone else be the leader. Continue switching until the time for the activity is over.

World Vision, Creativity with children. A Manual for Children's Activities



Copy me

Adapt this for online learning by asking one child to set an action or movement that everyone should copy on screen, or pass from one child to another with the teacher calling out names.

Working Together

Aim: To encourage observation, awareness of and respect for one another, and concentration.

You will need: A stick about the length of a pencil or a pen with a lid for each child.

The aim of the game is to keep the sticks from falling on the floor. To keep the two sticks stabilized, the children have to watch each other closely and react quickly. Both children have to learn to adjust to each other's movements. This is not easy.

Depending on the number of children, the game can be played with children standing in a triangle, in two lines or in circles.

The game becomes more difficult if more children participate.

1. Give each pair of children two sticks, preferably of equal length.
2. Ask the children to stand facing each other about the same distance apart as the length of the stick.
3. Demonstrate with one of the children what the activity requires: place one end of the stick against the tip of the index finger of the first child's right hand and the other end at the tip of the index finger of the second child's left hand.
4. To keep the stick balanced, both children have to apply a little pressure.
5. Now ask them to place the second stick between the tips of the index fingers of the other's free hand. Now ask them to try taking a step to the left or right whilst holding the sticks steady!
6. End the game once everyone has managed to keep the sticks steady for a period of time.

Ask: Was it difficult to keep the sticks balanced?

What did you have to learn to make this work?

If some of the children also try to do the activity in bigger groups, ask them:

Was it more difficult when there were more children? What did you learn about communication and patience?

IFRC/Save the Children and Catholic Aids Action Namibia (2003) *Building Resilience in Children Affected by HIV/AIDS*



Speaking in order

For online learning, challenge the class to say their names in a sequence, or to share a sequence in the correct order, where each child is given one picture, word or number.

For example, if each child chooses or is given an animal picture, the children could share them in order of size from small to big, with each child saying the name of their animal at the right point in the sequence. Keep practising until you can get it right, and do it quickly!

You can vary this activity according to the age and ability of the class – for example, children could give their height or birthday in order, or any other item connected to a topic you are working on as a class!

Learning breaks: Short activities to create breaks in your sessions

These short activity ideas can help children to refocus and re-energise in between activities.

These ideas are taken from *Mentally Healthy Schools* and the *Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families*. Some ideas have been adapted to enable their use for online learning. The original resource activity sheet can be found here:

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/media/2210/rebuild-and-recover-brain-breaks.pdf>

Following lockdown, children may find it difficult to return to the formality of sitting at desks and concentrating for longer periods of time. To reduce this restlessness, intersperse your lessons with brain breaks, which are short bursts of activity to keep their brain and body active. Begin these more frequently, gradually reducing throughout the term as the children adapt to their regular routine.



These can also be used to give breaks during online learning sessions. Adaptations for online learning are marked with this symbol.

Musical statues



Play a game of 'musical statues' in the classroom, where children dance and move around when music is playing and must stand totally still whenever the music stops. Ask the children to dance like something, e.g. robots, jellyfish. When the music stops, encourage the children to stand still in an appropriate pose for the subject. Instead of people sitting out for moving, choose a winner each round as the best robot or jellyfish etc. This can be changed each time – encourage the children to think of dance categories to try.



For online learning, ask children to move around and then 'freeze' on screen.

Go for a wellbeing walk

Take the children for a brief five-minute walk in one of the outside areas of your school. Once you reach the destination, ask them to close their eyes and tune in to their senses for 30 seconds. Ask them to answer in their heads: What can they hear? What can they smell? How do they feel? Ask them to open their eyes and really look closely at something they normally wouldn't, then ask what they noticed about it. In partners, children can share what they noticed before walking back to class.



For online learning, ask children to stop and notice what is around them wherever they are.



Mix it up

Stand the children in a circle, spread out with at least 1 metre between them. You or a child in the centre of the circle will then call out 'Mix it up if...', and then complete the sentence with a trait or characteristic e.g. you have curly hair, you have a brother. The children who the statement applies to must swap spaces, the last person to swap goes into the centre and thinks of a statement to call out.

Mirror mirror

Ask the children to get into pairs, standing apart but facing each other. Explain that one of them is to be the person and the other is to be their mirror reflection so they must match their actions as closely as possible. Every time the person moves slightly the mirror must copy. In the classroom encourage these to be slower, smaller movements, but where space allows these can be more mobile. Allow the children to alternate roles.



-  For online learning, one child can be the 'leader' and choose actions to do on screen which the rest of the class can copy.

Create a musical storm



Ask children to all tap one finger of each hand on their desk gently, like the patter of light rain. Then ask them to make the rain a little heavier, adding a second finger to the tapping. Build this up to a crescendo so the children are eventually tapping all fingers on the desk. You may also want to add in some instruments to make the sound of thunder. Gradually signal to the children to bring the volume down ending up with just a light patter again before silence. As an alternative, you could ask a child to conduct the storm.

-  For online learning, ask children to make the noise in the same way with objects in their home workspace. You could use the 'mute' setting to add variations between loud and quiet.

Drawing the invisible

Ask the children to partner up. One becomes the artist and draws a simple picture in the air with their finger. Their partner has to guess what the picture is. Alternate so they both have a go.



-  For online learning, children can take it in turns to be the 'artist' and draw on their video screen, with other children guessing. You may alternatively use an online drawing tool or whiteboard for children to draw on.

Activities to support children's learning

Understanding children and their learning styles

Aim: To get to know the child you are supporting with independent learning, and understand their learning styles.

Ask the child questions about themselves:

- Tell me the 5 best things about you?
- What do you enjoy doing?
- What do you want to do when you're older?
- Who are you most like in your family?
- What new thing have you learnt this week?
- How did you learn that new thing?
- What do you enjoy about learning new things?
- Which ways do you find the easiest for you to learn new things?

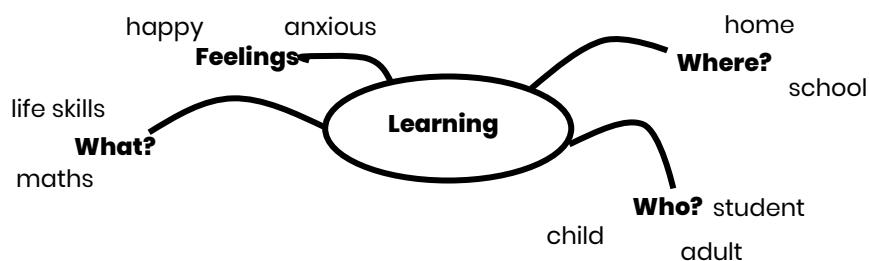


Exploring attitudes to learning

Aim: To help children explore their attitudes to learning.

You will need: Paper and pens.

Ask children to share ideas that they connect with learning (What? Where? How does it make them feel?) Ask them to write their answers in the form of a spider diagram, with similar ideas written close to each other in similar colours.



Emphasise that learning is a foundation for living a fulfilling life and achieving potential. Everyone has opportunities to learn all the time: learning is not just something we do in school.

Developing a Growth Mindset

Aim: To help children explore what it means to have a growth mindset.

You will need: Fixed and growth mindset statements.

Explain that a *growth* mindset is believing in the power of yourself and your brain. Our intellect and our abilities develop when we try hard things, use the right strategies and don't give up. So a growth mindset is when we know that, with practice, we will get better at something. If *fixed* is the opposite of growth, a fixed mindset means you think you can't get better at things, even if you practice. Wanting to give up, or deciding we're no good at something are both symptoms of a fixed mindset.

Write out the statements below and cut them up. Ask children to group them into Growth mindset or Fixed mindset statements. Or suggest that Growth mindset is one side of the room and Fixed mindset the other side of the room. Read out the statements in a different order get children to run to the side of the room (Growth or Fixed mindset) which matches the statement you have read.

Growth Mindset	Fixed Mindset
Mistakes help me learn and grow	I give up
I haven't worked it out yet	I can't do this
I can do hard things	I'm no good at this
I aim for progress not perfection	This is too easy
I am a problem solver	This is too hard
I go after my dreams	I'm afraid of making mistakes
I try new things	This is good enough
I don't give up easily	I don't want to try
When I don't succeed right away, I keep trying	There's no point doing this
I ask for help when I need it	I won't ask for help
I was born to learn	I don't like to fail
I strive to do my best	I'm scared of trying new things

Ask children to think about a fixed mindset statement that they often use, or they hear being used. What positive statement could they replace this with?

Create Growth Mindset Posters

Get children to create their own growth mindset posters using growth mindset statements and illustrations to put on the walls of the Learning Space or to take home to remind them to have a positive attitude to learning.

Setting Learning Goals

Aim: To help children set their learning goals

You will need: Child's Learning Journal

With the Learning Journal in front of you, (either printed out or using the same visuals and questions in an exercise book), explain that you would like the child to think of something that they would like to achieve or a challenge that they would like to overcome during the time that they are in the Learning Space. Explain that this is a Learning Goal.

Encourage children to think of their Learning Goals as plants that they are growing in their garden. Their Learning Goals can be represented as flowers or other plants that they choose and are recorded in their Learning Journal. If you feel that children may not appreciate the garden symbolism, then they can simply write their learning goals into a journal.

We recommend at the outset that children set three learning goals, which could include goals targeting literacy, numeracy and/or wellbeing.

Examples of Learning Goals

Literacy goals: read 3 books in 6 months, write a letter to a friend every week, learn to spell 5 new words every week...

Numeracy goals: learn to count to 100, learn a new times table each week...

Wellbeing goals: These could target something the child feels they would like to grow in, for example in the areas of psychosocial wellbeing targeted by the Learning Space programme. For example:

- Expressing feelings and emotions – *'I will keep a journal of my feelings and write in it at least once a week'*
- Understanding what has happened and being able to think positively about the future – *'I will find someone I trust and talk to them when I am confused or have questions'*
- Building self-esteem and self-confidence – *'I will learn a new skill and practice it twice a week'*
- Cooperation and learning how to have positive relationships with others – *'I will help look after my sibling after school once a week'*



Using the illustration of the flower in the Learning Journal (or any other plant the child chooses), ask children to:

Choose their big goal – something they would like to achieve.
(the centre of the flower)

Make the goal SMART (Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely) so that you can help the child to measure progress against the goal. Avoid a vague goal like “I will pay more attention to learning” but make it measurable e.g. “By the end of 6 months I want to have read 3 books.”

Break the goal into smaller manageable steps using I will / by / when and with whom template. In the Learning journal (this will help fill in the leaves)

Discuss purpose of the goal – why do they want to achieve their learning goal – how will it help them, how can they then help others, and where will it lead them? (the petals of the flower).

Think about potential obstacles to learning, and what they will do to overcome obstacles.

Planning for potential obstacles in advance can help a child stay motivated and succeed, even in the face of challenges, so ask the child to think of ways in which they may be prevented from achieving their Learning Goal, and then to draw up solutions to address those challenges. The solutions to obstacles can then be added to the drawing as things which give the plant life – for example, a watering can, the sun and a bee. They will serve as useful reminders every time the child looks at their Learning Goal illustration.

Talking about goals with your family: Children can talk about their future goals and ask a family member about their goals. Together they can draw these goals and agree on actions that will help each of them to reach their goals.

Literacy Learning Activities and Games

Some ideas for literacy activities have been adapted from resources developed by *Play Matters at Home Primary* and *International Rescue Committee*

Helping Children with Reading

Encourage readers to follow along with their finger as they read each word and sound out the letter sounds of unfamiliar words.

Everyday Objects Flashcards: Draw pictures of everyday objects and write the words for that object below the object, so children begin to memorise the word and connect it to the object it describes.

Spelling: If a child can spell a word, they can usually read the word. There is a strong relationship between spelling and word reading, because many of the same abilities are used in both: knowledge of letter sounds and letter patterns, and word meanings. Good spellers make for better readers and writers, so asking a child to spell words can improve their reading.

Dictionary words: As a child learns to read and their vocabulary increases, a dictionary is a valuable learning tool, especially if the child makes up his or her own booklet of words that are challenging.



Comprehension and Retention



Quick Draw After reading a part of a story or learning a new concept or topic, children draw a picture about what they've just read or learned.

One Word Splash After reading a passage or learning new vocabulary terms, ask children to write down one word that they feel sums up that material. This might seem overly simplistic, but it actually requires higher processing skills that help children digest what they are reading.

A-Z Topic Summary Help children connect the dots after finishing a book, or doing independent learning. Children should complete an A-Z Topic by writing a word or a sentence, that connects to the book or learning, for each letter of the alphabet. For example, if they learned about the continent of Africa, they could start by saying **Angola** is an African country.

Ask Questions Use questions that will check whether children have understood the text they have read:

- Knowledge questions: Questions whose answers are in the text, "What is the name of the girl?"
- Application questions: Questions that allow the child to understand the action of the story, "What has the mother done?"



- **Analysis questions:** Questions that lead the child to analyse the story. “Why did the boy take away the chair?” – Use ‘why’.
- **Synthesising questions:** Questions that lead the child to create new ideas related to the story, “What would have happened if the boy had not taken away the chair?” (Use how, what and why). What do you think will happen next / in the next chapter?
- **Evaluation:** Ask the child how they feel, what they think about the story. Did they like the story? Why? What would you do to enrich the story?

Reading Games

Parents don't have to know how to read to help their child to practise. They can encourage children to read to them while they relax and listen, or tell stories.

Family Stories Families can tell children stories about their parents and grandparents, or have children tell them stories about what happened on special days. It helps for children to know that stories come from real people and are about real events. Children also love made-up stories featuring them and/or their siblings. When children listen to stories, they hear the voice of the storyteller. This helps them hear the words when they learn to read aloud or read silently.

Reading Game “Oh No” Find 10 words from any written material. Write these words on slips of paper. Add two slips of paper that say, “Oh no”. Next place all the slips into a cup or bowl. Take turns picking and reading one slip of paper from the cup. Try to collect slips without picking an “Oh no”. If you pick “Oh No” return all your slips back into the cup and try again.



Secret Word First write the alphabet and think of a secret word.

Next, draw this: **X O O O O O X**, and place a rock on the left most **X**.

Finally, draw short lines for each letter of your secret word.



For example, “elephant” would be 8 letters, so 8 spaces - -----

Challenge family members to guess letters. If they guess a letter in your word, cross it out in the alphabet and write it on its correct line in the word.

In our example, if someone guessed the letter ‘**E**’ you would write the E in the correct place:

E _ E -----

If they guessed the letter ‘**F**’ this would be incorrect, so you would cross it out, and move the rock one space to the right:

A B C D-**E** F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

The aim is to figure out the secret word before the rock reaches the last X.

Numeracy Learning Activities and Games

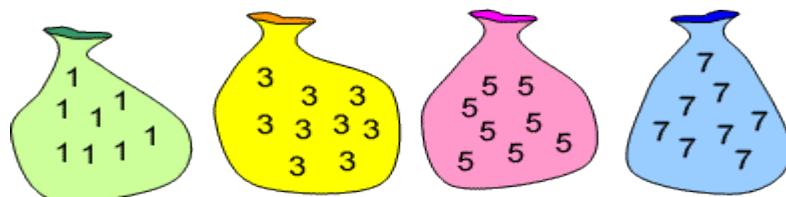
Using number games helps develop number sense. Ideas for maths activities have been taken from teacher education and school-based support in India www.TESS-India.edu.in, <https://nrich.maths.org/> and <https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/helping-children-maths>

Number sense

The Pile Play with two players. Collect 15 small items (bottles, caps, rocks etc). Each player gets six and the remaining three are put in the middle. One player closes their eyes while the other adds or subtracts from the pile in the middle. The other player opens their eyes and figures out the differences. Take turns. Add more players (and small items) to see who can find the change the quickest.

Time Maths Talk about these and ask the child to put them in order: a minute, time for a tree to grow 30 m high, time to boil an egg, an hour, a month, game of football with no extra time, 100 months, 1000 days, number of months since you were born, reading a book, number of years for the Earth to go around the Sun, one hour, two years

Play to 37 In this game for two players, the idea is to take it in turns to choose 1, 3, 5 or 7. The winner is the first to make the total 37. Four bags contain a large number of 1s, 3s, 5s and 7s.



Can you pick ten numbers from the bags that add up to 37?

Being strategic about numbers This game helps children to think about place value. You will need six-sided dice with numbers 1 to 6 or spinners with 10 segments numbered 1 to 10. This game can be enjoyed by students of all ages. For younger students the size of the boxes can be reduced. It is best played in pairs or with two pairs playing against each other. Each player draws a set of four boxes as shown below:

Player 1

--	--	--

Player 2

--	--	--

Each child takes turns to roll the dice, read the number and decide which of their full boxes to fill out with that number. Do this four times each until all your boxes are full. Read the four digits as a whole number. Whoever has the largest four digit number wins. The first person to reach 10 points wins.

Game 2 Whoever makes the smallest four digit number wins.

Game 3 Set a target to aim for. Then the students throw the dice four times each and work out how far each of them is from the target number. Whoever is the closest to the target number wins.

Understanding mathematical language

Using counters or stones Help children understand mathematical language by using counters or stones to add, subtract, divide or multiply

Which symbol?

Put in the missing symbols to make these number sentences correct. Use $+$, $-$, \times , \div and $=$

For example:

2 □ 3 = 6 is **2 x 3 = 6** and **5□3=2** is **5-3=2**

Times tables Knowing the times tables supports mathematical learning and understanding, and those children who have a strong grasp of them tend to be more self-assured when learning new concepts. It is generally agreed that it is best to start with 2, 5 and 10 as the patterns within them are easier for children to grasp. Two times table involves doubling, and using fingers initially can help children see and feel the symmetry of the doubling concept. In the 2 and 10 times tables the numbers are all even. Saying the 10 times table helps children to see/hear/notice the patterns "...6 tens are 60, 7 tens are 70...". With the 10 times table all the numbers end in 0 and in the 5 times table all the numbers end in 5 or 0. Once they have mastered the 2, 5 and 10 times tables, children should find it easier to move on to 4 and 8.

Learning the 9 times table Children spread all 10 fingers in front of them. To work out 9×1 , put your left little finger down – what are you left with? 9 fingers!



For 9×2 put your left ring-finger down. What are you left with? 1 finger and a gap followed by 8 fingers or 18. This trick works up to 9×9 (8 and 1 or 81). Ask children why these techniques work, and the mathematical reasoning behind them.

Buzz Choose a number between 2 and 9 to be the 'buzz' number. The first student says 1, the next student says 2, and so on. Instead of saying the selected number, or any multiple of it, the student says "buzz." If a player forgets to say buzz or says it at the wrong time, he or she is out. Continue until the group reaches the last multiple of the number times 9. For example, if "2" is chosen as 'buzz', the first student says "1," the next student says "buzz," the next student says "3," the next student says "buzz," and so on until 18 (2×9) is reached.

Problem solving



Travel maths Ask children to think about planning a trip to another city. Which transport would they take and how long would the journey take? Suggest that the child compares answers with their family.

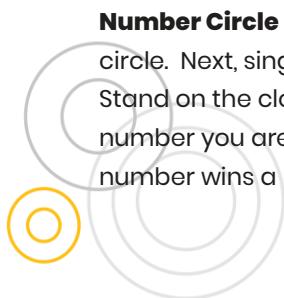
Every day estimating Think of something that you do every day – for example, eating a meal – and estimate how many times you would do this in your whole life.



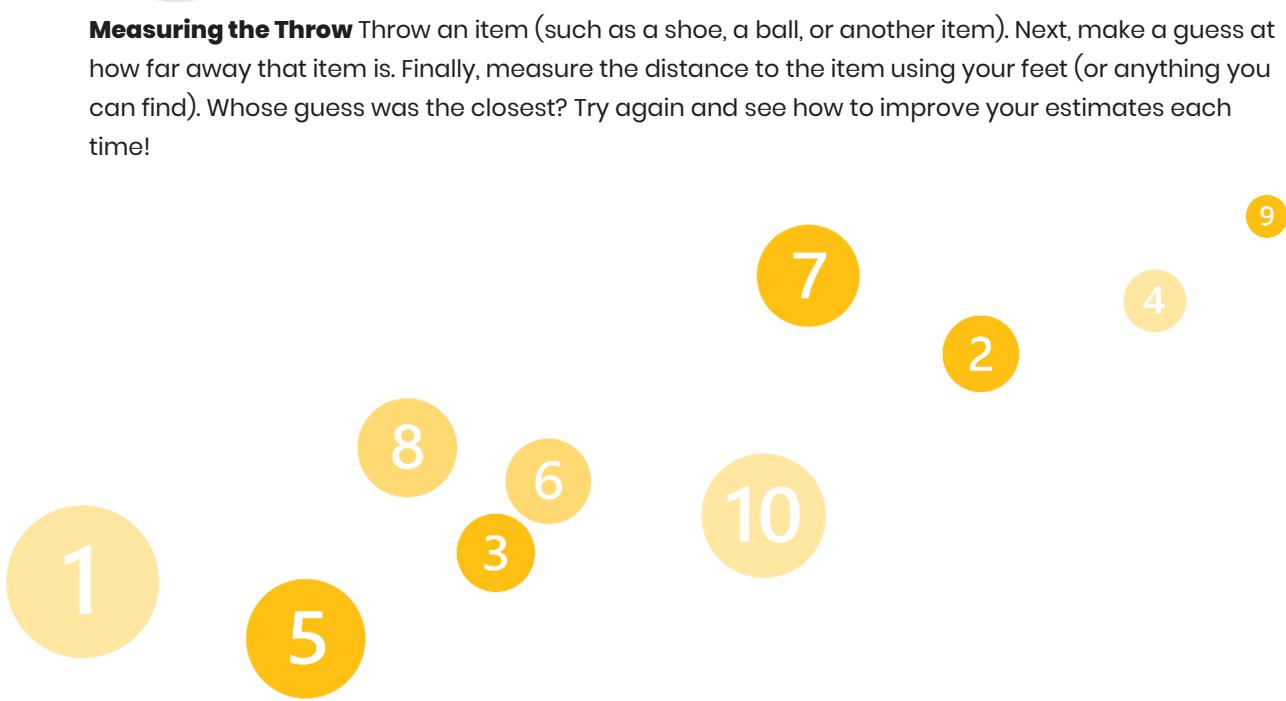
Numeracy Games



Bottles Set up empty bottles in a triangle. Next, roll a ball into the bottles. Count how many have been knocked down and how many are standing up. Create a short story about the bottles, e.g. there were seven goats in the yard, then a horn honked and three goats ran away. Repeat this until all the bottles have been knocked down.



Number Circle Draw a big circle on the ground using a stick. Write the numbers 1 to 10 around the circle. Next, sing a favourite song and dance outside the circle. When the song stops, stop dancing. Stand on the closest number and point to another player. Next, multiply, divide, add or subtract the number you are standing on and the number that they are standing on. Whoever makes the lowest number wins a point! Play until someone has five points.





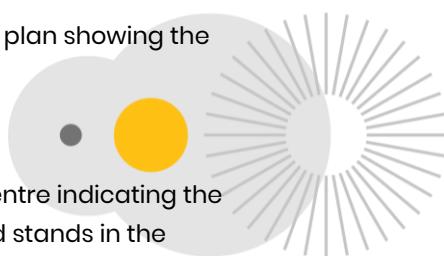
Learning Outdoors

Outdoor learning experiences can develop reflective and inquisitive thinking, along with problem-solving approaches. Learning outdoors can also develop an understanding of how to look after the environment.

Ideas for activities have been used from children in permaculture <http://childreninpermaculture.com>

Weather: Work out ways to measure and record different aspects of the weather – the rainfall, wind speed, hours of sunlight.

The Sun: Observe the path of the sun at different times of the year and draw a plan showing the height or angle of it.



Make a sundial by drawing a circle on the ground with two footprints in the centre indicating the place where the child will stand to cast their shadow. On a sunny day one child stands in the footprints at each hour on the hour. The others mark on the circle where the shadow falls. Then the children will be able to use the sundial to tell the time.

Be grateful for nature and the materials it provides. Think of all of the different natural elements that helped to build your house (wood, trees, stones, etc) You may want to draw these elements or make them into a collage.

Observe how you feel when you are learning in different ways. Discuss afterwards with a group how each person felt, and thereby realise that different people prefer different ways of learning.

Sketch or draw plants growing outside (some of them may be considered to be weeds). Look at the detail of those plants, learn about the different parts of a plant (root, stem/trunk, flower, leaf, fruit) and what a plant needs to grow.



A detailed plant study: Spend some time connecting to a particular plant, looking at it, drawing or painting it. Notice where it is growing and how it changes through the seasons. Then research it, where it likes to grow, and what uses it has.

Learn about photosynthesis: how plants use the energy from the sun to make wood (carbon) and oxygen (which we breathe).

Catching water: Look at different ways to catch rainwater, consider why water is important for us.

Help to grow food plants in a garden and care for them by watering and mulching.



Patterns: Find different patterns in several different systems (e.g. spirals in rivers, flowers, snails) and try to work out the function of that pattern (e.g. branching for collection and distribution, spirals for growth). Learn about different seasonal patterns, listen to patterns in bird song.

Rocks and stones: Observe and feel different types of rocks and stone, notice their patterns and texture. Guess at how they were made.



Collaborative Learning Activities

Sometimes you may want to do some learning activities together as a group, instead of focusing on individual learning. Here are a few suggestions of activities that can open up learning together – but do be creative and think of your own!

Read a story or poem to the children, or tell a familiar story from memory. Ask children to respond to the story by:

- Drawing a picture of their favourite part of the story
- Working in groups to create a drama or script for a play based on the story
- Writing a response to the story according to their writing level:
 - Practise writing some key words from the story
 - Ask children to answer comprehension questions about the story
 - Write a ‘part 2’ for the story – choose one of the characters and write about what might have happened next for them!

In the news! Choose a focus topic which would be interesting or helpful for children to know more about – something that has been in the news around the world recently, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or a scientific discovery, or a sports event, or a successful national sports team, and discuss the topic together. Ask children to respond by:



- Writing a newspaper headline and article about the topic, sharing their perspective of the event or topic
- Creating an awareness or publicity poster on the topic
- Working together to develop a presentation about the issue
- Focusing on key vocabulary in this topic and practising writing sentences using these words

Use what you see: Even if you don't have many resources in the classroom, what you have can become part of your learning materials:

- Maths: Count how many there are of a certain type of object in your space – such as things that are blue, things that are circles, things that are heavy... You could also add and subtract when you have counted these different categories! Ask each child how old they are, and try to add up the total age, or count how many arms and legs, or other features you have in total!
- Writing: You could label different objects or parts of the room and challenge students to write sentences or longer paragraphs or stories using as many of these words as they can!

Go outside if possible and observe what's around you together. Use the natural environment, or the built environment, to form part of your learning:

- Maths-focused activities could include sorting different things, like pebbles or leaves into different groups (based on size, shape, colour or texture, for example)
- Children could choose one object to bring back into the learning space to draw
- Talk about what you see – the seasons, the weather, how things grow – and use this to inspire writing or creative activities together



Play a game or sing a song This could be a familiar song or a game you choose that targets psychosocial support for children. You can use this as inspiration to:

- Ask children to write a story based on the key ideas in the song
- Link the theme of the game to the learning topic – for example, a game about emotions could lead to some activities around writing about feelings, or drawing pictures about how we feel, or some creative writing on the topic
- Link numeracy activities to the song or game – is there something to count or compare? For example, in a song about animals, could we sort these animals in order of their size, or some other characteristic?



Interview time! Invite a special guest to the learning space for one session (ensure this person reads and signs your code of conduct before attending the session, and is not left alone with children). This may be a parent or caregiver who has an interesting job, or an elderly member of the community who can share more about what life was like in the past. You could:

- Explain that this guest will be visiting the space in the next session, and ask children to spend time writing questions for the interview – this could include practising writing key vocabulary, and understanding how to formulate questions. Then, allow children to interview the guest using these questions in the next session.
- Ask children to write about the visit afterwards, perhaps by writing a profile of the visitor, or simply writing a few sentences about them.
- Ask children to use their imagination to write about a day in the life of the person who visited – you may want to encourage them to practise using time by creating a schedule of their typical day.



Going places: Imagine together that your learning space is transformed into something else for the day, such as a shop. Ask the children to imagine what kind of shop it is – what does it sell? Or perhaps it is a market with many stalls. Or, it might be a museum with exhibits, or a train or bus station.

- Children could work in groups to create whatever is needed to make the space look like this other place – such as signs, prices, or pictures or models of different products or items
- Children could take it in turns to act out different roles in the space – this could use maths skills as children set prices and 'buy' and 'sell' things in the market, or buy tickets to travel
- Follow up the activity in the next session by asking children to reflect on their created world through an art piece, a piece of creative writing or using it as a basis for some numeracy or literacy practice

Activities to end each Learning Space session

End the session with an activity that enables each child to recognise something that they have learned or made progress in during that day's session. Doing this each week will help children to reflect and recognise that they are always learning, even if it is something really small or hard to notice.

Here are some ideas for recognising learning each week:

My learning box In your first session, give each child a box which they can decorate as part of the activities that week. Each week, they can write one thing they have learned, or they are proud of, on a piece of paper and put it in their learning box. After a few weeks, you can review learning with each child by talking through what they have written on their papers.

Our garden If you have a space on a wall in your learning space, spend time in the first session creating a 'garden' together, for example by cutting and sticking, or colouring, a green section at the bottom of a very large paper, and also colouring in the sky.

Each week, each child should draw and cut out something they want to grow in the garden, which represents something they have learnt that week. It could be a flower or a plant, a fruit or vegetable, or a leaf to add to a tree. You may instead have a selection of ready-cut shapes in different colours which children can choose from.

Give each child time to write one thing they have learnt this week on their shape, and stick it to the big picture.

Alternatively, if you do not have a permanent space on the wall, you could use a roll of paper that you bring with you to each session, and children gradually add to, as you unroll a little more each time. At the end of the learning space project, or after a period of weeks, you can unroll the whole thing and look at all the progress the group has made.



Additional Resources and Useful Links

Library of Useful Resources:

All subjects:

- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/learn> – Online resources, lessons, videos and activities for all school ages, covering maths, literacy, science, history and geography.
- <https://quizlet.com/en-gb> – Learning flashcards and games to support learning in multiple subjects. Translations available.
- <https://www.khanacademy.org/> – Free online lessons and practice in maths, sciences and humanities. Translations available.
- <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/student/> – Video resources and lessons for a variety of subjects including maths, literacy, science and art.
- <https://onebillion.org/onecourse/app/> – An app which teaches children to read, write and become numerate through activities and games. Currently available in English, Swahili and Chichewa.
- <https://learnathome.withyoutube.com/videos/> – A selection of videos for interactive learning.

Literacy:

- <https://digitallibrary.io/> – Access to free digital books. 48 language translations available.
- <https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/> – Interactive games, videos and resources to help children read, write, speak and spell in English.
- <https://storyweaver.org.in/> – Online storybooks for children. Translations available.
- <https://literacy.concordia.ca/en/> – Selection of game-like activities or online stories, to promote reading comprehension and writing skills of early readers.
- <https://childrens.poetryarchive.org/explore/> – An online poetry archive for children, including resources to teach children about writing, learning, listening to and performing poetry.
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems> – A collection of poems, with a children's section and articles to teach children about poetry.
- (And see the 'All Subjects' section at the top).

Maths:

- <https://nrich.maths.org/> – A selection of teaching ideas and interactive games to teach children maths.
- <https://photomath.app/en/> – This is an app which has step-by-step guides to help conquer maths topics.
- <https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/helping-children-maths>
- (And see the 'All Subjects' section at the top).

Science:

- <https://www.nasa.gov/kidsclub/index.html> – Learn about space through the work of NASA. The site also has interactive games.
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/z7nygk7> – Online resources, lessons, videos and activities for all school ages to teach them science.
- (And see the 'All Subjects' section at the top).

Technology:

- <https://www.typingclub.com/> - This interactive website teaches you to touch type to improve your computer skills.
- <https://code.org/athome> - Hundreds of activities and tutorials to teach the fundamentals of programming, coding and computer science. Over 45 language translations available.

Creativity:

- <https://comicsclub.blog/comics-worksheets/> - Archive of downloadable drawing and writing activities.
- <https://jarrettlerner.com/activities/> - A collection of free, downloadable resources including Comic Book Pages, writing and drawing activities.
- <https://wonderopolis.org/> - A website of interesting questions, answers and facts for children.
- <https://www.travelandleisure.com/attractions/museums-galleries/museums-with-virtual-tours> - This page has links to 12 art museums from around the world so you can explore them through virtual tours.

Languages:

- <https://www.duolingo.com/> - Interactive website/app that teaches you foreign languages in a fun and interactive way.

Child-friendly Covid-19 information:

- <https://inee.org/resources/talking-about-coronavirus-19-young-children> - A resource document to help adults speak to children about Covid-19. Translations available.
- <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teachers-can-talk-children-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19> - Tips for having age appropriate discussions to reassure and protect children from Covid-19. Translations available.
- <https://www.redcross.org.au/stories/covid-19/talking-to-kids-about-covid-19> - Advice on how to talk to children and young people about Covid-19.

Wellbeing Support:

- <https://www.otb.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/At-Home-with-Weaving-Well-being-A-Mental-Health-Journal-for-Kids.pdf> - A free wellbeing handbook for children. Created for children who are at home, but could be used, or you could take ideas for using, in your Learning Space.
- <https://www.pearson.com/uk/educators/schools/issues/working-together-to-build-healthy-and-happy-schools/the-wellbeing-zone.html> - Resources suitable for adults and young people, including advice on coping with anxiety, and fun activities to support wellbeing.
- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse73d9e> - This page has tips to help cope with the Covid-19 pandemic and maintain your wellbeing.