

Planning for Learning through Games

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Making plans

Child-friendly planning

The purpose of planning is to make sure that all children enjoy a broad and balanced experience of learning. Planning should be flexible, useful and child-friendly. It should reflect opportunities available both indoors and outside. Plans form part of a planning cycle in which practitioners make observations, assess and plan.

Children benefit from reflective planning that takes into account the children's current interests and abilities and also allows them to take the next steps in their learning. Plans should make provision for activity that promotes learning and a desire to imagine, observe, communicate, experiment, investigate and create.

Plans should include a variety of types of activity. Some will be adult-initiated or adult-led, that focus on key skills or concepts. These should be balanced with opportunities for child-initiated activity where the children take a key role in the planning. In addition there is a need to plan for the on-going continuous provision areas such as construction, sand and water, malleable materials, small world, listening area, role-play and mark-making. Thought also needs to be given to the enhanced provision whereby an extra resource or change may enable further exploration, development and learning.

The outdoor environment provides valuable opportunities for children's learning. It is vital that plans value the use of outdoor space.

The UK Frameworks

Within the UK a number of frameworks exist to outline the provision that children should be entitled to receive. Whilst a variety of terms and labels are used to describe the Areas of Learning there are key principles which are common to each document. For example they advocate that practitioners' planning should be personal based on observations and knowledge of the specific children within a setting. They acknowledge that young children learn best when there is scope for child-initiated activity. In addition it is accepted that young children's learning is holistic. Although within the documents Areas of Learning are presented separately to ensure that key areas are not over-looked, within settings, children's learning will combine areas. Thus the Areas of Learning are perhaps of most use for planning, assessment and recording.



Focused area plans

The plans you make for each day will outline areas of continuous provision and focused, adult-led activities. Plans for focused-area activities need to include aspects such as:

- resources needed;
- the way in which you might introduce activities;
- individual needs;
- the organisation of adult help;
- size of the group;
- timing;
- safety;
- key vocabulary.

Identify the learning and the Early Learning Goals that each activity is intended to promote. Make a note of any assessments or observations that you are likely to carry out. After carrying out the activities, make notes on your plans to say what was particularly successful, or any changes you would make another time.

A final note

Planning should be seen as flexible. Not all groups meet every day, and not all children attend every day. Any part of the plan can be used independently, stretched over a longer period or condensed to meet the needs of any group. You will almost certainly adapt the activities as children respond to them in different ways and bring their own ideas, interests and enthusiasms. The important thing is to ensure that the children are provided with a varied and enjoyable curriculum that meets their individual developing needs.

Using the 'Early Learning Goals'



The principles that are common to each of the United Kingdom curriculum frameworks for the early years are described on page 2. It is vital that, when planning for children within a setting, practitioners are familiar with the relevant framework's content and organisation for areas of learning. Regardless however, of whether a child attends a setting in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales they have a right to provision for all areas of learning. The children should experience activities which encourage them to develop their communication and language; personal, social, emotional, physical, mathematical and creative skills. They should have opportunities within literacy and be encouraged to understand and explore their world.

Within the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2012), Communication and Language; Physical Development and Personal, Social and Emotional Development are described as Prime Areas of Learning that are 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, and for building their capacity to learn, form relationships and thrive' (page 4, DfE 2012). The Specific Areas of Learning are Literacy, Mathematics, Understanding the World and Expressive Arts and Design.

For each Area of Learning the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) describe what children are expected to be able to do by the time they enter Year 1. These goals, detailed on pages 4 to 6, have been used throughout this book to show how activities relating to 'Games' could link to these expectations. For

example, for Personal, Social and Emotional Development, one aim relates to the development of children's 'self-confidence and self-awareness'. Activities suggested which provide the opportunity for children to do this have the reference PSE1. This will enable you to see which parts of the Early Learning Goals are covered for a given theme and to plan for areas to be revisited and developed.

In addition, an activity may be carried out to develop a range of different Early Learning Goals. For example, when the children make wanted posters for people to compete in games for medals they will develop their writing skills for Literacy. Also, when they write with a pencil and illustrate their posters, they will use their fine motor skills which are part of Physical Development. Thus, whilst adult-focused activities may have clearly defined goals at the planning stage, it must be remembered that as children take on ideas and initiate their own learning and activities, goals may change.

The Prime Areas of Learning

Communication and Language

Listening and attention: children listen attentively in a range of situations. They listen to stories, accurately anticipating key events and respond to what they hear with relevant comments, questions or actions. They give their attention to what others say and respond appropriately, while engaged in another activity. (CL1)

Understanding: children follow instructions involving several ideas or actions. They answer 'how' and 'why' questions about their experiences and in response to stories or events. (CL2)

Speaking: children express themselves effectively, showing awareness of listeners' needs. They use past, present and future forms accurately when talking about events that have happened or are to happen in the future. They develop their own narratives and explanations by connecting ideas or events. (CL3)

'Games' provides many opportunities for children to enjoy listening, understanding and speaking. There are a number of books featuring games and these can be used to stimulate interest in the chosen themes, encouraging children to listen and to talk. When discussing favourite games and searching for games within stories, children will have the opportunity to ask questions. When considering the types of ball most suited

Example chart to aid planning in the EYFS

Week beginning:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
FOCUSED ACTIVITIES					
Focus Activity 1:					
Focus Activity 2:					
Stories and rhymes					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Indoor)					
Collage					
Construction (large)					
Construction (small)					
ICT					
Imaginative play					
Listening					
Malleable materials					
Mark making					
Painting					
Role play					
Sand (damp)					
Sand (dry)					
Water					
CONTINUOUS PROVISION (Outdoor)					
Construction					
Creative play					
Exploratory play					
Gross motor					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Indoor)					
ENHANCED PROVISION (Outdoor)					



Theme 1: Favourite Games

Communication and Language

- Invite the children to bring in a favourite game. Encourage the children to talk about why it is a favourite and to explain how it is played. (CL3)
- Involve the children in collecting story books that have pictures of the characters playing games. Talk about the games. Which ones would the children like to play? Which book characters would they like to play with? (CL1)
- Pick two storybooks that the children know well that involve play in the story. Show the children an object that is a clue for each book, such as a dinosaur in a bucket for *Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs* by Ian Whybrow. Talk about how the objects were used to play games within the stories. Involve the children in retelling one of the tales. (CL1, 3)

Physical Development

- Develop fine motor skills by playing games with pegboards. (PD1)
- Enjoy playing imaginatively with malleable materials. (PD1)
- Invite the group to make suggestions for games to play outside. Enjoy using their suggestions. (PD1)

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- In groups play a favourite game. Before starting, talk about the rules for the game and why they matter. Talk about taking turns and being fair. (PSE2)

Literacy

- Make a group big book of favourite games. Include photos of children playing the games and sentences about the games written by the children. (L2)

Mathematics

- Make jigsaws with fewer than 10 pieces, from greetings cards. Use them in a treasure hunt game (see activity opposite). (M1)
- Play games in the sand and water trays to develop language for shapes and sizes. (M2)
- Ask the children to draw a picture of their favourite game on a square of card. Sort the cards into sets such as outdoor/indoor games or board/not board games. Involve the children in suggesting criteria for the sorting and in counting the number of favourite games in each set. (M1)

Understanding the World

- Invite parents and carers to come and talk about their favourite games from when they were children. (UW1)

- Investigate the best material for making 'Snap' cards (see activity opposite). (UW2)
- Enjoy playing educational computer games designed for the EYFS. (UW3)

Expressive Arts and Design

- Make posters to advertise a favourite game. (EAD2)
- Ask children to paint portraits, on A3 paper, of themselves playing favourite games. (EAD1)

Activity: Jigsaw puzzle hunting game

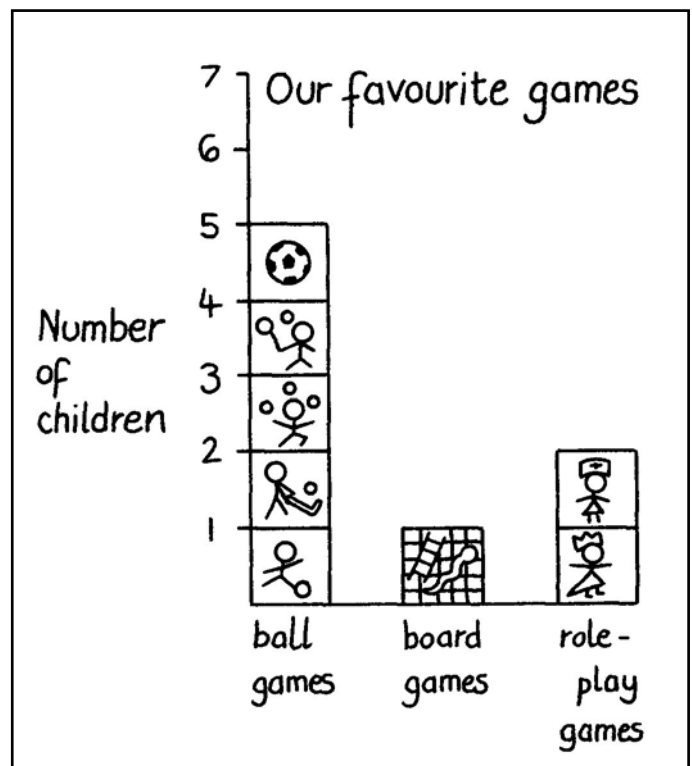
Learning opportunity: Counting to ten.

Early Learning Goal: Mathematics. Numbers.

Resources: Child-friendly scissors; a jigsaw with around 10 pieces; used greetings cards; envelopes, pencils.

Key vocabulary: Numbers to ten, jigsaw, piece.

Organisation: Small groups.



What to do: Show the group the jigsaw with fewer than ten pieces. Tell them that it is a favourite one. Look on the box to see how many pieces are in the jigsaw. As a group count the number of pieces in the box. Together make the jigsaw.

Explain that you would like a jigsaw with fewer than ten pieces. Ask for suggestions of how many pieces the jigsaw might have. Together, count to nine.

Invite each child to select a card and to cut the picture into pieces. Encourage the children to count how many pieces are in each jigsaw.

Use the envelopes to store the jigsaws. Ask each child to write on an envelope their name and the number of pieces in their jigsaw.

Enjoy using the 'jigsaws' for a treasure hunt game. Hide the pieces for one puzzle around the room. Tell the children how many pieces there are to find. Ask them to hunt for the pieces and to make the puzzle.



Activity: Investigating materials for 'Snap' cards

Learning opportunity: Sorting and comparing materials.

Early Learning Goal: Knowledge and Understanding the World. The world.

Resources: An old pack of 'Snap' cards; examples of 'Snap' cut cards from thin card, writing paper and tissue paper; safe scissors, crayons.

Key vocabulary: Card, paper, 'Snap', favourite.

Organisation: Small groups.

What to do: Play a short game of 'Snap'. Talk about why 'Snap' is some people's favourite game.

Ask the children what the cards are made from. Encourage the children to feel the cards.

Discuss what 'Snap' cards need to be like if they are to be used again and again. Show the children the cards cut from different materials. Help them to consider whether the materials are appropriate for 'Snap'. Which of the materials work best? Why?

Provide crayons and scrap materials for the children to make their own sets of 'Snap' cards.

Display

Cover a table with fabric and invite the children to bring in games to make a 'Favourite Games' display. Provide the children with pieces of card on which to write their names. Display the portraits and posters on a board covered with black paper. Involve the children in choosing paper on which to mount their pictures and border strip that links with the chosen backing papers.

On a second table put out a jigsaw with enough pieces to provide challenge. Put out a sign to say 'Can you help to do this favourite jigsaw?' Put up the square pictures of favourite games as a block graph for one of the criteria chosen by the children. Involve them in making a title for their bar chart.