

How Will My Child Develop in Early Years (Reception)?

Although all children develop at different rates, there are certain areas that develop quickly in each year as they progress through school. Here is an idea of how your child may be developing this year, ways you can support this development, as well as potential pitfalls and how to deal with them.

So What Will Your Child Be Doing in Their Reception Year at School?

Your child will be:

- gaining more independence in their personal care (particularly with toileting, handwashing and dressing skills);
- rapidly developing their language skills (including listening and understanding, as well as speaking) so that what they say is more grammatically correct and they can answer questions and follow more complex instructions;
- asking lots of questions (especially those beginning with 'why'), and keen to find out about the world around them;
- learning to share and take turns, and to play co-operatively with others, whilst using talk to resolve disputes;
- learning that they must sometimes wait for what they want;
- enjoying hands-on practical activities;
- developing their fine-motor skills (the use and strength of the small muscles in their fingers and hands) and learning to write letters and words;
- developing their imagination through role play;
- learning to recognise letters and put them together to read words;
- enjoying books and understanding that the printed words have meaning;
- learning to recognise numbers and match them to quantities;
- developing their awareness of space and their ability to control their movements;
- responding well to praise and keen to please adults.

Helping Your Child Develop These Skills

You could:

- introduce opportunities for your child to learn to wait for something they want (don't always respond immediately unless the situation is urgent or dangerous);
- play games that involve turn-taking and let your child experience losing from time to time;
- share books as often as you can, and look for text in the world around you and talk about what it means;
- look at numbers and count objects;

- help your child become more independent with toileting and dressing;
- have a look at the [Educational Guides](#) to supporting your child's learning in early years to get a better idea of the early years' curriculum and what you can do to help your child.

Potential Pitfalls

- First and foremost, your child is learning to cope with being away from you for at least 6 hours a day. If your child has been with a nursery or other childcare provider full-time prior to this, they may find it a little easier, but bear in mind that they are still having to adapt to a new classroom, teachers and friends.
- Children in Reception must learn to become more independent, simply because there are not enough adults to give them constant individual attention. They also need to learn to wait to talk to an adult.
- There are new social and friendship rules to negotiate in Reception – although children may come to school with friends they have made at Nursery, they will meet new children and may have to learn to combine maintaining old friendships with developing new ones.
- The school day is long when you are only 4, and this, combined with all the new learning that's going on, results in tiredness, which tends to get worse as the week goes on.

What to Watch out For

- Any change in character is a warning sign. If your child becomes uncharacteristically quiet or withdrawn, or if they become angry or aggressive, you should probably dig deeper to find out what is going on.
- Sleep problems are another warning sign (nightmares, insomnia, reluctance to go to bed and bedwetting are all signs of distress).
- Physical symptoms such as headaches and tummy aches can also be a sign of a worried child, especially if they coincide with school days.

If you have any concerns about how your child is coping in Reception, make an appointment to speak to their teacher so that you can agree upon how to support your child. Be reassured that, though many children are wobbly for the first few weeks at school, the great majority settle quickly and have an extremely happy first experience of school.