

Can work independently on most tasks

Building independence in the early years creates a foundation for lifelong learning. As children develop independence, they gain confidence in their own abilities and become more willing to try new experiences, solve problems and persevere when things are challenging. Children who are encouraged to be independent often become more confident, motivated, resilient and curious.

Practitioners can support children by:

- Reviewing your continuous provision. Children should have access to a range of engaging resources that match their interests and stage of development.
- Providing open-ended resources and activities that encourage them to explore, investigate and problem-solve independently.
- Using a Total Communication approach to support understanding through visual timetables, first/then boards, choice boards and visual prompts.
- Offering opportunities for them to return to activities following transitions, such as snack time or outdoor play, so that learning can continue uninterrupted.
- Using timers to help them understand expectations around attention and participation. Gradually increase the length of time as children become more confident.
- Celebrating effort, persistence and problem-solving rather than focusing only on outcomes.
- Giving them meaningful responsibilities throughout the day that promote independence and a sense of belonging.
- Allowing them time to think, try and solve problems before stepping in to help.

Activities, ideas, resources and strategies:

Support Independent Choice

- Provide clearly labelled resources that children can access themselves.
- Use photographs and visual labels to help children find and return equipment independently.
- Offer opportunities for children to choose activities based on their interests.
- Use visual supports such as visual timetables, choice boards, First/Then boards to support understanding of expectations and reduce the need for adult prompts

Provide resources that encourage children to develop ideas independently, such as:

- Story sacks and puppets
- Small world resources
- Construction materials
- Art and creative resources
- Loose parts play

Build Attention and Perseverance:

- Use sand timers or visual timers.
- Praise children for staying engaged.
- Support children to return to a task if interrupted.

Promote responsibility:

- Provide daily jobs such as giving out snack plates, setting up activities and helping to tidy resources

Use positive reinforcement and specific praise such as:

- "You solved that problem by yourself."
- "You kept trying even when it was difficult."
- "Good listening."