

Often needs help to put bag and coat away

Developing independence in the early years helps children build confidence, resilience, and a sense of responsibility. Learning to manage personal belongings, such as putting away a bag or coat, supports self-help skills and encourages children to take an active role in their daily routines. These early opportunities for independence help children develop confidence, motivation, and readiness for learning.

Practitioners can support children by:

- Encouraging children to independently collect, carry, store, and retrieve their belongings as part of daily routines.
- Supporting children to put on and take off coats, breaking tasks into manageable steps and gradually reducing adult assistance to develop independence.
- Modelling and teaching practical dressing strategies, such as the coat flip, and provide regular opportunities to practise through everyday routines and role play.
- Offering resources that develop the fine motor skills needed for dressing, including activities involving zips, buttons, poppers, and Velcro.
- Using visual prompts and clear organisation systems to help them remember where belongings are stored.
- Allowing sufficient time for them to practise self-help skills and recognise their efforts through positive encouragement and praise.
- Working in partnership with parents and carers to promote independence with dressing and managing belongings both at home and in the setting.

Activities, ideas, resources and strategies:

- Ensure children have plenty of time during arrivals and departures to practise putting away and collecting their own belongings
- Make sure peg and storage areas are accessible, uncluttered, and clearly identified with consistent spaces for each child
- Use visual supports, such as photographs, name labels, and simple visual prompts, alongside clear instructions (for example, "coat off", "coat on peg", "bag away")
- Teach and model the steps involved in putting away and collecting belongings, including naming parts of clothing and demonstrating what to do
- Use peer role models to demonstrate independence skills where appropriate
- Break tasks into small steps and provide support only when needed, gradually encouraging children to do more independently
- Offer regular opportunities to practise dressing and undressing skills through daily routines and play experiences
- Give specific praise and encouragement, for example, "You found your peg by yourself," "You remembered where your bag goes," or "You put your coat away independently"
- Work in partnership with parents to encourage the development of independence skills at home as well as in the setting