



How children learn

Introduction

Your child is an individual and different from all others. The way your child learns best depends on many factors: age, learning style and personality. Read the notes below, and think about your child. This will help you to choose activities and methods that will suit your child best.

Children pass through different stages of learning

- A baby or infant learns about the world through the senses.
- From about two until seven years old the child starts to develop the ability to reason and think, but is still self-centred.
- After the age of about seven a child usually becomes less self-centred and can look outside themselves. By the age of 12 most children can reason and test out their ideas about the world.
- This means that with younger children we need to personalise and give examples which relate to themselves, whereas older children need help to make sense of the world around them. This also means that children must be at the right stage of learning. For example younger children are ready to learn about numbers, colours and shapes but are not ready for abstract grammatical rules.

What kind of learner is your child?

- It is important to understand how your child likes to learn best. Which are the child's dominant senses? Do they like pictures and reading? If so you can encourage your child to use drawings, pictures, maps or diagrams as part of their learning.
- Some children like listening to explanations and reading aloud. You could use [stories](#) to encourage this kind of child. And most children enjoy learning through [songs, chants and rhymes](#).
- Does your child like to touch things and physically move about? Some children have lots of energy! You could play games to get them moving or running around, acting out rhymes or stories or even dancing!
- Quieter children may have a good vocabulary and be good readers. [Word games](#), crosswords, [wordsearches](#), anagrams and [tongue twisters](#) would be good to encourage these children.
- Other children require logical, clear explanations of rules and patterns, or like to work out the rules for themselves. They may be good at maths too. For these children, activities such as puzzles, problem-solving, ordering or categorising provide ideal opportunities for learning.



What kind of interaction does your child prefer?

- Some children are outgoing and sociable and can learn a language quickly because they want to communicate. They are not worried about making mistakes.
- Other children are quieter and more reflective. They learn by listening and observing what is happening. They don't like to make mistakes and will wait until they are sure.
- If your child is outgoing they may prefer learning in groups with other children, whereas a quieter child may need more private, quiet time to feel more secure about learning a language. A bedtime story in English could be an opportunity to provide this quiet time.

Motivating your child

- For a child to be motivated, learning needs to be fun and stress-free. Encourage them to follow their own [interests and personal likes](#). For example if your child likes football he or she will probably like to read a story about football even if the level is a little difficult. Interest and motivation often allow children to cope with more difficult language.
- Try to provide as many fun activities as you can for learning English. Songs and music, videos and DVDs, and all sorts of games are motivating for children.

For how long can your child concentrate?

Children can usually only concentrate for short periods of time. Make sure that you stop or change activity when your child is bored or restless. This might be after only a few minutes.

Correcting your child's mistakes

Children respond well to praise and encouragement – let your child know when they have done something well. Don't criticise them too much when they make a mistake. It's natural to make mistakes when learning a language. Don't correct every grammatical mistake – encourage your child to use English to communicate.

Repetition and routines

- Children need to repeat language items many times to remember them so don't be afraid to repeat games or do several different activities with the same language topic or set of words.
- Children often love to repeat the same song or story as it gives them a sense of confidence and familiarity.
- Establishing a regular routine for homework is also important. Set a regular time for homework and help your child as necessary.

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