

Language and communication

Early childhood learning trajectories

What is language and communication?

Language and communication are the foundations for all learning and social interaction. They relate to many other aspects of cognitive, physical and social development, beginning in infancy. Language and communication involve 4 main components:

- <u>Receptive language</u> emerges as children understand what is said to them (verbally and non-verbally) before they can talk, understanding more as they grow.
- <u>Expressive language</u> includes the ability to make purposeful sounds, words and gestures to convey their thoughts, feelings and ideas to others.
- <u>Emergent reading</u> describes the early stages of understanding written text. It includes decoding letters and symbols and becoming familiar with written materials.
- <u>Emergent writing</u> is when children express themselves by making marks and using these to convey meaning, eventually learning letters and using these to form words.

Many Australian children first develop these skills in a language other than English, and partnerships with families can help build on this valuable learning.



Early Years Learning Framework

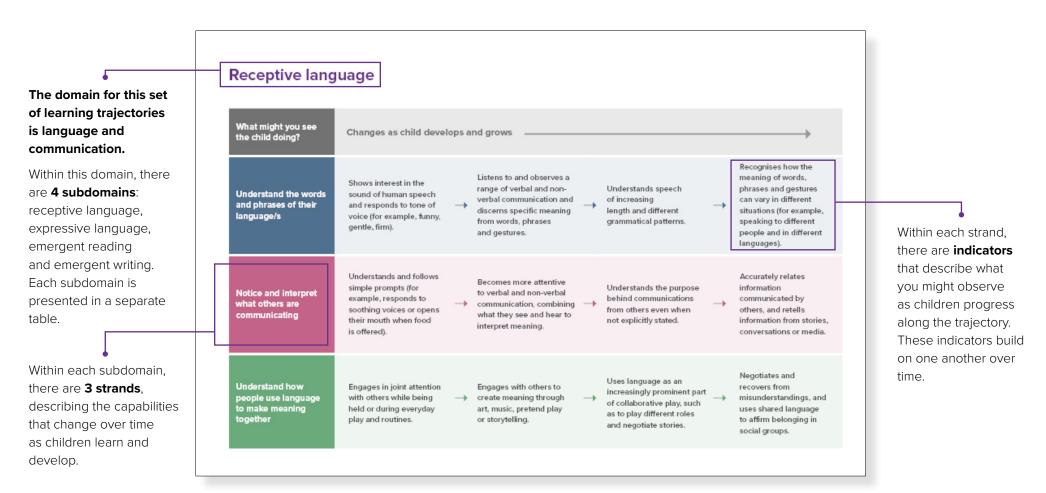
AERO's Early Childhood Learning Trajectories align with the principles, practices and outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework V2.0. The Early Childhood Learning Trajectories: User Guide provides further information and demonstrates how the Learning Outcomes can be mapped to domains.

National Quality Standard

Quality Area 1 – Educational program and practice

How to use the Early Childhood Learning Trajectories

These learning trajectories will help you observe children's progress in language and communication. They will give you language and ideas for documenting children's learning and development, and for your conversations with families and colleagues about children's progress. The trajectory is not a checklist. You are encouraged to use your professional knowledge and judgement in determining how each child may demonstrate progress along each trajectory, and how best to support their learning.



Receptive language

What might you see the child doing?	Changes as child develops and grows							
Understand the words and phrases of their language/s	Shows interest in the sound of human speech and responds to tone of voice (for example, funny, gentle, firm).	→	Listens to and observes a range of verbal and non- verbal communication and discerns specific meaning from words, phrases and gestures.	→	Understands speech of increasing length and different grammatical patterns.	→	Recognises how the meaning of words, phrases and gestures can vary in different situations (for example, speaking to different people and in different languages).	
Notice and interpret what others are communicating	Understands and follows simple prompts (for example, responds to soothing voices or opens their mouth when food is offered).	→	Becomes more attentive to verbal and non-verbal communication, combining what they see and hear to interpret meaning.	→	Understands the purpose behind communications from others even when not explicitly stated.	→	Accurately relates information communicated by others, and retells information from stories, conversations or media.	
Understand how people use language to make meaning together	Engages in joint attention with others while being held or during everyday play and routines.	→	Engages with others to create meaning through art, music, pretend play or storytelling.	→	Uses language as an increasingly prominent part of collaborative play, such as to play different roles and negotiate stories.	→	Negotiates and recovers from misunderstandings, and uses shared language to affirm belonging in social groups.	

Expressive language

What might you see the child doing?	Changes as child develops and grows						
Pronounce the words and phrases of their language	Babbles, vocalises and makes first approximation of words.	Uses single words with increasing clarity and combines them into 2- or 3-word phrases.	→	Uses words and phrases with increasing accuracy and expressiveness, self-correcting occasional errors.	→	Uses tense, pronouns, adverbs, and a widening vocabulary of real and some imaginary words.	
Use their language to express their thoughts and feelings	Expresses thoughts and emotions spontaneously through facial expressions, movement or sound.	Expresses themselves in a wider range of verbal and non-verbal ways (for example, words, sounds or gestures).	→	Develops a more visible personal style of communication, choosing forms of expression to suit their unique identity and personality.	→	Uses rich and varied language to express thoughts, ideas and feelings in different contexts.	
Use their language to engage in two-way interactions	Engages in 'conversations' with others, using babbling, gaze or gestures to respond.	Asks questions and uses language to start and sustain interactions, learning to take turns speaking.		Engages in several turns of question-and-answer to clarify meaning or extend their thinking.	→	Uses a range of communication skills to engage in and manage interactions (for example, persuasion, tone, emphasis or humour).	

Emergent reading

What might you see the child doing?	Changes as child develops and grows						
Enjoy reading and use it in their exploration and discovery	Enjoys manipulating books, bringing them to their mouth and exploring turning the pages.	Enjoys being read to, showing preferences for favourite books or other forms of written text.	→	Pretends to 'read', retelling familiar stories from memory or using pictures as prompts.	→	Shows curiosity about the meaning of words or symbols, and seeks out books and other written texts to find information.	
Understand how reading materials are structured and used	Understands that reading is connected to speaking, possibly vocalising while being read to.	Distinguishes between the text and pictures in a book, and realises the 2 are related.	→	Understands basic elements of how text is organised (for example, spaces between words, reading left to right and up to down, titles at the start).	→	Recognises how different types of text are structured (for example, book, recipe, birthday card, website).	
Decode written marks or symbols and use them to make meaning	Associates sounds with symbols or pictures, such as making relevant sounds in response to a picture.	Engages in imaginative play, using objects to represent things (the basis for learning that letters and words can also represent things).	→	Recognises letters in their name and begins to know the sounds that familiar letters make.	→	Recognises and reads familiar words, and begins to use letter sounds to decode simple words and understand their meaning.	

Emergent writing

What might you see the child doing?	Changes as child develops and grows						
Use fine motor skills to make marks with writing tools	Develops strength in their arms, wrists and hands through play with various hand-held objects.	→	Holds a crayon, pen or pencil in their fist and uses it to make marks on paper or surfaces.	→	Uses basic writing tools more confidently and begins to explore other writing tools such as keyboards or touchscreens.	→	Uses writing tools effectively and writes letters with increasing accuracy in shape and position.
Enjoy writing and use it to express themselves and communicate with others	Explores making marks on paper, including hand/finger painting.	→	Draws circles, lines and squiggles and explores using colours and textures on paper or in the sand.	→	Begins to talk about the meaning and purpose of what they are drawing or 'writing'.	→	Organises multiple ideas into stories, and represents these in drawings or emergent writing attempts.
Understand how writing represents language and its parts	Shows interest in others who are drawing and writing.	→	Shows awareness of the purpose of writing and notices different writing activities in everyday life.	→	Includes the forms of letters and numbers in their drawing, and possibly writes one or more letters in their name.	→	Writes simple words while sounding them out and begins to understand spelling conventions.

Creating opportunities to support children's language and communication

Receptive language

- Vary the words, tones and gestures you use when talking to children to make language interesting at an age-appropriate level.
- Recognise that children may understand more than they can say, especially children from a language background other than English.
- 'Wonder aloud' or narrate what you are seeing or doing to help children make connections between words and actions.
- Encourage families to celebrate and extend children's emerging understanding, using their home language as a foundation for learning.

Expressive language

- Experiment playfully with sentences, syllables or sounds (for example, in songs or rhymes) to help children recognise the building blocks of speech.
- Use a range of age-appropriate strategies to sustain two-way interactions, such as asking further questions or open-ended questions.
- Repeat, extend and rephrase children's words and sentences, modelling accurate expression and reinforcing their successful attempts.
- Encourage children to wonder aloud, hypothesise and predict, using any language they have to express and extend their thinking.

Emergent reading

- Provide literacy-rich environments for all age groups using books – including bilingual books – print, signs and labels to incorporate reading into play and routines.
- Engage in songs, nursery rhymes and finger play and later rhyming games to support phonological awareness.
- Engage children in shared reading activities and talk to children about the meaning of what you have read together.
- When reading, introduce concepts of print such as reading from left to right, or phonological strategies like sounding out letters.

Emergent writing

- Provide various age-appropriate materials for children to experiment with mark-making, and ask older children what their marks mean.
- Model purposeful writing throughout the program and encourage children to incorporate it into their sociodramatic play.
- Encourage children's writing attempts and celebrate their efforts to convey meaning while gradually building accuracy over time.
- Introduce children to diverse symbols and writing scripts that reflect their home languages, cultures and experiences.

About this resource

Our Early Childhood Learning Trajectories are designed for teachers and educators working in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services with children in the years before school. They can support ongoing professional learning, for individuals, and entire ECEC services and teams.

The Early Childhood Learning Trajectories describe how children learn and develop in these key domains:

- Executive functions
- Social and emotional learning
- Mathematical thinking
- Language and communication
- <u>Physical development</u>.

While each learning trajectory describes children's progress in a single domain, they are designed to be used in interconnected ways. A single experience may support progress in multiple domains at the same time. Progress in one domain may depend on progress in another.

B Further reading

For more information on our learning trajectories research

- Early Childhood Learning Trajectories: User Guide
- Early Childhood Learning Trajectories: The Evidence Base

More information

The AERO website features <u>further guidance</u>, including practice guides and case studies for early childhood practice. Visit <u>edresearch.edu.au</u> for more information.

8 of 8