



Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships:

Play-based learning and intentionality

November 2023

This Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships practice resource is part of a series of 8 practice resources for Play-based learning and intentionality in early childhood education and care services (ECEC). Each resource is aligned with the Principles of the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF V2.0).

Before using this resource, read the [Introduction: Play-based learning and intentionality](#). The introduction provides insights into the importance of intentionality in play-based learning in quality, evidence-based ECEC practice with cultural responsiveness at its heart.

Relationships with children and families are integral to play-based learning and provide an important foundation for being intentional. Highly effective teachers and educators build relationships through culturally safe and responsive interactions, as they intentionally support children's learning. They respect children's agency and *also help children learn about their responsibilities to others, to support their own and others' wellbeing, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork* (EYLF V2.0, p. 14).

Strategies for intentionality within play-based learning that can support this Principle include:

- Recognise opportunities for meaningful interactions that both build relationships and support children’s learning, development and wellbeing, including –
 - within play-based experiences, including interactions with individual children and small groups
 - in everyday rituals and daily routines such as mealtimes, nappy changes and transitions.
- Understand how the social and emotional development that is fostered through strong relationships can build on and reinforce other areas of learning. Use resources such as the [early childhood learning trajectories](#) to support exploring these connections.
- Listen to and interact with each child in a way that sparks curiosity, problem-solving, creativity and independent discovery. Create a culture in which children expect and trust that you will engage in sustained, responsive interactions that are both playful and authentic. This helps children develop positive dispositions to learning.
- Use a range of strategies in all your interactions to support learning and build relationships. Key strategies include –
 - **scaffolding:** Break learning into pieces that children can gradually master, temporarily providing guidance while they build independence
 - **questioning:** Ask thoughtful questions that build on what children know and do, while provoking them to wonder and explore new ideas
 - **modelling:** Demonstrate new skills and strategies in ways that children can copy and build on, while talking about what you are doing
 - **co-constructing:** Be a learner alongside the children, explore new ideas or skills together and share your learning and reflection.
- Follow children’s interests and ideas, and model strategies for seeking new information when you do not feel confident in your own understanding. Working alongside children as a co-investigator helps build trusting and respectful relationships.
- Create environments and experiences that promote sustained engagement between small groups of children, as well as with teachers and educators. This provides greater opportunities for active listening, deeper discussion, and meaningful interactions.
- Give children time to think and reflect during play-based learning and everyday routines. This leads to deep learning and builds their sense of security. Notice the learning that occurs in pauses, silences and reflective moments, as well as in active experiences and verbal interactions.

Reflection questions

- How can intentionality feature in play-based learning as a way to reinforce your warm, genuine and responsive relationships with children and families?
- How do you create environments that are interesting, engaging and culturally safe places that support children's interactions with each other?

This practice resource is part of a series of 8 Play-based learning and intentionality resources including:

- [Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships](#)
- [Partnerships](#)
- [Respect for diversity](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives](#)
- [Equity, inclusion and high expectations](#)
- [Sustainability](#)
- [Critical reflection and ongoing professional learning](#)
- [Collaborative leadership and teamwork.](#)

Before using the other resources in this series, read the [Introduction: Play-based learning and intentionality](#).

They link to the [early childhood learning trajectories](#) suite of resources including the [Learning trajectories user guide](#), [Evidence report](#) and the [Assessment for children's learning practice resources](#).