Activities to Try at Home

Here are a selection of ideas and activities split into the different Areas of Learning that you can try at home. These activities are designed to teach and consolidate the skills that your child is learning in reception.

Communication and Language

- Read a range of books together, including non-fiction. Encourage your child to be curious and ask questions about things they want to find out more about or do not understand. You could pause at certain points in the book to check your child understands what has been read.
- Look back through photos and talk about previous experiences you have had together. Model how to speak in full sentences and use past tense language correctly. You could also talk about what you would like to do together in the future, to practise using future tense language.
- Encourage lots of talk at home by holding conversations. Start a conversation on a topic that interests your child, or pose an open-ended question, such as, 'What do you look forward to when you wake up?' Try to keep the conversation going through several back-and-forth exchanges, but try not answer each time with another question, make comments in response too.
- Try and use new words throughout the day to expand your child's vocabulary. You could swap a word for another. For example, instead of saying 'it is a bright colour', you could say 'it is a very vivid colour'. You could also repeat sentences back to your child and add in extra descriptive words. For example, if your child says 'I like apples,' you could say, 'Yes, I like juicy, ripe apples too'.
- To also support language, model correct sentence structure and words to your child – instead of overcorrecting them. You can repeat words or sentences back to them in a natural way. For example, if your child says 'I buyed a banana' say 'Yes, you bought a banana.'
- At bedtime, instead of reading a story, you could read some child-friendly poems. Encourage your child to discuss what they think the poem is about and talk about new words and their meaning.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Discuss different feelings and try acting out various emotions for your child to identify. Also, recognise and talk about the feelings characters may be experiencing in the stories that you read together.
- Develop your child's confidence and independence by going to an unfamiliar park or soft play centre. Encourage them to try out new equipment they have not been on before.
- Using building bricks, try and create the tallest tower that you can together. If the tower falls, try again to rebuild it, sharing ideas on how you could work together to make it better.
- Plan some snacks or meals together and discuss the importance of healthy food choices and a balanced diet.
- Encourage your child to get themselves dressed on their own. Start by giving them a little bit of help with things, such as their top button or start off zips, until they can do this independently.
- Try playing some simple board or card games together to practise taking turns and waiting patiently for the next go. Additionally, use it as an opportunity to talk about rules and why these are important to follow when playing a game.
- Encourage your child to talk about their friends and build relationships with others. You could arrange opportunities to invite friends or family members round or meet up and play in an outside space together.

Physical Development

- Create a poster together on a topic that interests your child. Check to see if your child is holding their pencil in the right way when drawing pictures and writing words and sentences. For the majority of children, they should be holding their pencil with a three-fingered tripod grip to make writing easier and more comfortable.
- Practise using child-safe scissors to cut out images from magazines and catalogues, or cut out shapes drawn on pieces of paper. Show your child how to hold scissors in one hand correctly with their thumb in a position at the top, using their other hand to guide the paper.
- During mealtimes, encourage your child to cut up their own food using child-safe knives and forks. Start with soft food before moving to food that is slightly tougher. Alternatively, provide cutlery to practise cutting playdough.
- Draw some family portraits or pet pictures. Prompt your child to look at the details they need to add to their pictures and make sure they are taking care to be as accurate with their pencil as they can.
- As a family, try some different physical activities, such as dancing, playing football, going for walks, riding a bike or going swimming. This will help to develop coordination, strength and balance.
- Create your own obstacle course around the home or garden. Have things to balance on, jump over, run around and throw at a target, such as a ball of socks into a bucket.

Literacy

- Read a book together and pause at points throughout the story to discuss ideas on what your child thinks might happen next.
- Visit a local library and borrow some books to look at together. These could include storybooks, rhymes, poems, information books, comics and magazines. Encourage your child to retell you what has been read using their own words, but also words and phrases used in the books.
- Using small world toys, or yourselves, act out some favourite stories together using words and language from the story.
- Encourage your child to practise writing simple words and sentences using the phonic sounds that they know. You could give them different purposes for writing, such as writing a shopping list, writing a greetings card or a postcard, writing a sign for their creations, or writing some treasure hunt instructions.
- Practise identifying letter sounds in the environment. Look for letters you see when you visit different places and practise reading the words.
- Practise reading common exception words (tricky words or high frequency words) by making some word cards to play games with, e.g. bingo, memory, or snap. Also, encourage your child to read the words in funny voices to help make it more fun!
- Encourage your child to practise forming letters properly by writing using a range of different materials, such as pencils, chalk, crayons and pens. They could also try writing letters into a tray of sand or flour using their finger or try painting letters onto a pavement using a paintbrush and water.

Mathematics

- Play games and do activities which involve counting aloud to 20 and beyond. For example, playing hide-and-seek or counting how many steps it takes to walk from the kitchen to the bedroom.
- Set up a tea party with some toys. Encourage your child to practise sharing out food, cutlery, plates and cups equally between each of the toys. Talk about which amounts could be distributed equally and which could not.
- Create some number cards (either 1 to 10 or 11 to 20) and see if your child can place them in order. Then, ask your child to close their eyes while you either take a card away or swap a card to a different place in the sequence. When your child opens their eyes, they can be a number detective and work out what you have done, then fix the problem in the number sequence.
- Have a set of five small toys. Hide some of the toys under a blanket and leave the rest of the toys uncovered. Then, support your child to work out how many toys are hidden. For example, if there are five cars in total and two are visible, how many are hiding? If your child can confidently do this, try having a larger total of up to ten toys.
- Put out a pile of dried pasta, cubes or pom-poms and each grab a handful of items. Count how many you each have and then compare quantities. Which quantity is greater than or less than the other? Do this several times. Did you ever get two quantities that were the same?
- To practise subitising, play some games which involve using dice. Encourage your child to look at the spots on the dice and instantly recognise how many there are on each side without having to count them each time.

Understanding the World

- Talk about people your family know and the roles they have in society, e.g. the jobs they have or any volunteer roles they do as part of the community.
- Make comparisons of life when you were a child to what life is like now for your child. What has changed and what has stayed the same? You could also look at some old photos or items found around the house.
- Explore the natural world around you in your garden or local park. Encourage your child to look closely at the plants and insects, making observations and drawing pictures.
- Use opportunities to talk about contrasting environments and places that are different from each other. For example, you could compare a trip to the beach to a trip to town. What did you see that was different? You could also look at settings in stories, such as a jungle or under the sea.
- While out for a walk or looking out of the window, point out seasonal changes in the world around you. What are the signs your child can spot for each season?
- Begin to look at and talk about changing states of matter, such as melting, freezing, and boiling. Cooking and mealtimes are a great opportunity to do this, e.g. making jelly, freezing ice cubes or melting chocolate.
- Look around your local neighbourhood and talk about any similarities and differences between cultural and religious communities with your child. You may notice buildings, decorations or items found in shops.

Expressive Arts and Design

- Encourage your child to share and talk about any creations they have made, including explaining the processes they have used. Activities could include baking cakes, creating with junk-modelling materials or using playdough.
- Provide opportunities to mix paint and create different colours, but also explore how to mix paint to create different shades of the same colour. Alongside this, provide a variety of tools for your child to create different textures with the paint, e.g. cotton wool balls, sponges, bubble wrap, forks.
- Explore a range of art techniques, such as collage, printing or rubbing. Your child could make a card or decoration for an upcoming celebration.
- Have some fun using props and sheets of material to role play characters together (such as superheroes or animals) or set up a role play area and encourage your child to become a doctor or shopkeeper.
- Use some time together to sing well-known nursery rhymes and popular songs, e.g. in the car, on a walk or before bed. If your child is feeling confident, they could perform these songs to others and add actions to the lyrics and words.
- Make some puppets, story stones, story spoons or masks and use them to invent a new story. Alternatively, encourage your child to adapt or retell one of their favourite stories with you.