

# Starting Reception

Steps on the journey for  
children with SEND



Support resources to support 'Starting Reception: Your child's journey starts at home.'

## Growing Independence: Putting on/taking off coat and shoes



### Stepping stones to Growing Independence

- I can recognise/reaches for my coat and shoes.
- I can move my arm/foot in my coat or shoes.
- I can pull my zip up from half way.
- I can pull my zip up from bottom.
- I can do velcro up on my shoe.
- I can push my foot into my shoe.

### Things to help me grow

- Fine motor skills.
- Dressing up clothes with different fastenings.
- Dolls clothes.

### Making things easier

- Magnetic zips.
- Velcro fastenings.
- Easy dressing ranges.
- Visuals such as photos, symbols, first then boards.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Occupational Therapy Team:

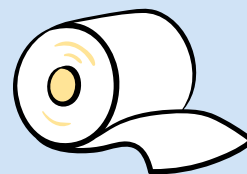
[Dressing Skills.](#)

[Hand Skills.](#)



## Growing Independence: Using the toilet and washing hands

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### Stepping stones to Growing Independence

- I can pull loose fitting trousers off.
- I can pull trousers up.
- I am showing awareness.
- I need changing.
- I can sit on the toilet.
- I am happy to have help to wash hands.
- I can dry hands on towel.
- I can turn tap on and off.

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine motor skills.
- Dressing up clothes including trousers.
- Soap pumps in water.

### Making things easier

- Elasticated waist bands.
- Easy dressing ranges of clothes.
- Motion sensor soap dispenser.
- Sturdy and big enough steps for toilet and sink.
- Visuals such as photos, symbols, first then boards.

### Helpful Links

#### Toileting and additional needs

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Occupational Therapy Team

Useful resources for toileting children with  
additional needs.



## Growing Independence: Getting dressed



- I can make a choice between two items of clothing.
- I can move my arms and legs to help with dressing.
- I can take off some loose fitting clothes.
- I can finish off pulling my clothes on when helped.
- I can put my arms and legs in clothes when helped.
- I can undo and do up velcro.
- I can undo zips and buttons.

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine motor skills.
- Dressing up clothes with different fastenings, include coats and, large socks and trousers.
- Use backward and forward chaining.

### Making things easier

- Elasticated waist bands looser fitting clothes.
- Easy dressing ranges of clothes with easy fastenings label clothes with a picture label.
- Visuals such as photos, symbols, first then boards.
- Seamless clothes.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Occupational Therapy Team:

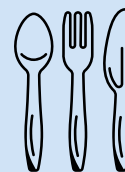
[Dressing Skills.](#)

[Hand Skills.](#)





## Growing Independence: Using cutlery and drinking from open cup



- I can open my mouth to be fed.
- I can put spoon or fork into my mouth when someone loads it for me.
- I can sit down at a table to eat and drink.
- I can spoon feed myself independently.
- I am practicing using a fork and knife.
- I can drink out of an lidded cup.
- I can drink out of a small cup with a small amount of liquid in.

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine motor skills.
- Using cutlery with playdough.
- Helping to prepare food using child safe utensils.
- Transferring activities in sensory materials with spoons.
- Use backward and forward chaining.

### Making things easier

- Suitable cutlery such as...
- Non slip mat under plates and bowls (or suction bowl).
- Plates with lips to stop food falling off edges.
- Ensuring the child is appropriately positioned to eat.

### Helpful Links:

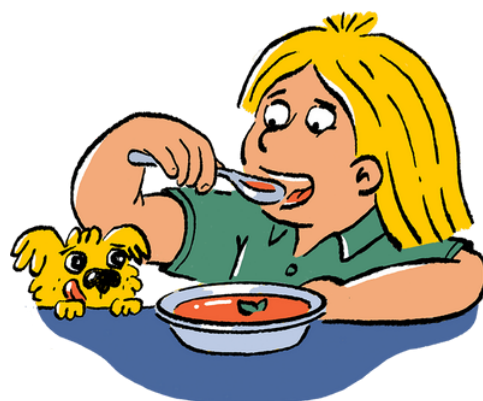
Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics

Occupational Therapy Team:

[Using cutlery.](#)

[Hand Skills.](#)

[Sitting position and posture.](#)



## Growing Independence: Spending time away from parent/carer



- I can play in same room as my parent coming back when I need help or comfort.
- I can play near my parent venturing away for brief moments.
- I can communicate that I do not want to be left.
- I can communicate that I want a loved one.
- I can communicate by my actions I need help.

### Things to help me grow

- Practicing brief separations if not been to an setting.
- Multiple transition visits, a home visit can also be helpful.
- Transition meeting prior to child starting to understand the child's needs and interests.
- Reading stories about starting school.

### Making things easier

- Photos, videos and books about setting before they start.
- Photos and books about family that the child can take into setting.
- Visuals such as photos, symbols, first then boards.
- Taking time to tune into children's communication and responding to that.
- An object from home to ease the transition.

### Helpful Links:

[CCC Transitions Toolkit.](#)



## Growing Independence: Taking part in imaginative play



- I can play independently in my own way.
- I can play alongside others.
- I can imitate familiar actions from everyday life.
- I can imitate the actions of others in play.
- I can act out scenes from tv shows or experiences.
- I can take turns in play with help.
- I can communicate in play with familiar adults.

### Things to help me grow

- Imitating and or engaging with the child's play following the child's lead.
- Providing a model for play.
- Narrate play with simple and predictable language.

### Making things easier

- Having resources that reflect the child's experiences, for example if a child is tube fed a doll with a tube, food boxes of child's favourite food in play kitchen.
- Ensuring that the role play area is physically accessible.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Occupational Therapy Team:  
[Hand Skills.](#)



## Growing Independence: Drawing, painting, colouring



- I can make marks with sensory play materials.
- I can make different movements with mark making materials.
- I am beginning to imitate others marks.
- I begin to make marks for a purpose specific purpose.

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine motor skills.
- Providing lots of sensory experiences where the child can begin to make marks.
- Offering mark making opportunities around the child's interests or experiences, for example painting with car wheels, or making a picture list to buy favourite foods.

### Making things easier

- Ergonomic crayons/pens or grips.
- A slanted board.
- Non stick mat under paper.
- Putting pencils on a tray so they do not roll away.
- Plain surfaces on table to reduce visual overload.
- Using mark making materials that produce a clear bold mark with little pressure.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics

Occupational Therapy Team:

[Hand Skills.](#)

[Getting ready to write.](#)



## Growing Independence: Sharing story books



- Touches tactile elements, lifts flaps or presses buttons.
- Looks at pictures
- Communicates about pictures or story.
- Has favourite books.
- Turns pages.
- Joins in some familiar lines in books.
- Begins to follow a story.

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine motor skills.
- Choosing books on favourite topics.
- Photo books of child family and friends.

### Making things easier

- Board books or books with more rigid pages.
- Sticking foam stickers of velcro dots between pages to make it easier to turn pages.
- Props from the story to help tell the story.
- Interactive books such as flaps, tactile and sound elements.
- Using symbols or pictures to help tell/match the story.
- Books with familiar and or repetitive stories.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Occupational Therapy Team:  
[Hand Skills.](#)



## Growing Independence: Exploring the world around them



- I can notice changes in the environment.
- I can navigate the environment with increasing independence.
- I am open boxes, bags or draws to find out what's inside.
- I show an interest in what is going on around me when it is related to my interests.
- I am do things to make something happen (cause and effect).

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine and gross motor skills.
- Drawing a child's attention to things in the environment.
- Providing opportunities for the child to explore around interests, for example sensory play, opening boxes to find things.

### Making things easier

- Keeping the environment consistent.
- Making the environment as accessible as possible.
- Ensuring safety in restricting access things that may be unsafe.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics

Occupational Therapy Team:

Hand Skills.





## Building relationships and communicating: Going to bed and waking up

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Sleep can be an issue for lots of children going to sleep and waking up during night, this is more common in children with special educational needs or disability. This can be due to sensory needs, understanding, difficulty with transitions, activity levels, and so forth. Changes to the routine of starting school may need to be considered relating to sleep.

### Things to help me grow

Consider whether the child's bed time and morning routines need to change before the child starts school, then you can prepare for and put this in place in advance.

### Making things easier

- Consider the child's sensory needs, for example soft pyjamas, texture of bedding, the light, sounds, and other things.
- Visual routine for bedtime and morning.
- Nappies that hold a larger capacity.
- Bed wetting sheets on bed to minimise disruption of full bed change.

### Helpful Links:

#### Early Support Sleep info

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics

Occupational Therapy Team:

[Sleep routines.](#)

[Sleep and SEND.](#)



## Building relationships and communicating: Brushing teeth

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Brushing teeth can be challenging for many children but this can be increasingly challenging for children with SEND often due to sensory sensitivities.

### Things to help me grow

- Developing fine motor skills.
- Dressing up clothes with different fastenings, include coats and, large socks and trousers.
- Use backward and forward chaining.

### Making things easier

- Elasticated waist bands, looser fitting clothes.
- Easy dressing ranges of clothes with easy fastenings label clothes with a picture label.
- Visuals such as photos, symbols, first then boards.

### Helpful Links:

[Teeth Brushing Dental Health Strategies for Sensitive Children.](#)



## Building relationships and communicating: Practice sharing and taking turns



- I can play alongside another child with the same set of toys or larger equipment like a sand box.
- Begins to notice other children playing alongside.
- Engages in a turn taking activity with an adult or with one other child in a motivating activity such as throwing a ball.
- Begins to be able to wait for a turn with support.

### Things to help me grow

- Build turn taking into every day activity.
- Ensuring there are enough resources for multiple children to play alongside each other to reduce conflict.

### Making things easier

- Activities that are naturally end the turn are easiest to navigate, for example rolling a ball, dropping a car down a ramp, wind up toys.
- Support waiting in turn taking by the adult sensitively extending, for example an adult building increasing taller towers and children taking it in turns to crash.
- Using toys that are designed for a younger developmental stage to support turn taking can support confidence as they reduce need to think about that skill and usually allow for pauses.
- Model communicating “my turn” with gestures, words and signs as appropriate.



## Building relationships and communicating: Singing along to songs and nursery rhymes

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- I favourite songs and rhymes.
- I can play an instrument or dance to songs.
- I join in actions in songs.
- I make sounds to join in songs.
- I join in some words in action songs and rhymes.
- I can communicate what songs or rhymes I want.

### Things to help me grow

- Making lots of sounds during singing activities.
- Use songs that have fun sounds in them to encourage joining in and imitation.
- Singing while looking in mirror.
- Pause during songs for children to continue the next fun action or fill in gap, for example a scream during row row row your boat, initially this may just be a facial expression, look or action.

### Making things easier

- Using signs BSL/Makaton when singing (links below).
- Offering choices of songs using objects or pictures, for example a star for twinkle twinkle, a bus for wheels on the bus.
- Using a microphone to sing along to songs (some children may dislike this).

### Helpful Links:

[Singing Hands Makaton song videos.](#)



## Building relationships and communicating: Talking about activities, experiences and the world

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- I respond to activities through body language, gestures, sounds and sometimes signs or words.
- I recognise photos or videos of activities, experiences, family or friends, by looking, through body language and sounds.
- I communicate about activities and experiences when looking at photos or videos with gestures, single signs words or phrases.

### Things to help me grow

- Tuning in and responding to children's body language and gestures modelling signs and words in context.
- Look at photos and videos of events after they have happened to talk about it using key words.
- Bring objects home to chat about afterwards, for example a pine cone.

### Making things easier

- Take objects of reference with you to activities, for example a toy duck to feed ducks, which can then help you to talk about after.
- Photos and symbols for child to communicate key words.
- An adult drawing simple pictures of what is going to happen can help child process what is going to happen and help them "talk" about it afterwards.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Speech and Language Therapy Team:  
[Using Language.](#)



## Building relationships and communicating: Showing they need help by words or signs

- I become frustrated or distressed if I need help communicate needs through my body language.
- I communicate needs through sounds.
- I communicate my needs by guiding an adult.
- I communicate my needs through actions and gestures.

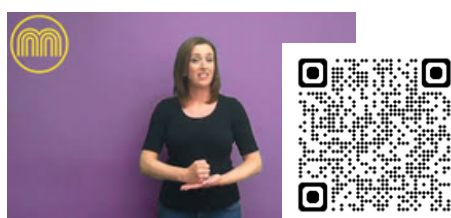
### Things to help me grow

- Tuning in and responding to children's body language and gestures as if they were intentionally communicating needs, modelling key signs, words or phrases may help your child learn to use this in context.
- Modelling the sign "help" when a child needs help can help child learn to use (there are video links below).
- Use opportunities where a child needs help to model signs, words and phrases naturally, for example a wind-up toy that the child cannot do independently by enjoys.

### Making things easier

- Choosing boards with objects, photos or symbols for child to communicate needs.

### Helpful Links:





## Building relationships and communicating: Listening and paying attention for short periods of time

- I have favourite songs, books or shows.
- I enjoy and show awareness or anticipation in people games and action songs such as tickles or row row row your boat.
- I enjoy playing with “fun” toys with an adult.
- I can join in with action songs and rhymes.
- I can join in simple play routines or turn taking game with an adult, for example rolling a ball or feeding a doll.

### Things to help me grow

- Have a “special box” of really fun toys that can be played with together like bubble blowers, spinning tops or wind up toys that you make time to play together.
- Make sure activities are within the child’s attention span and build on that, do not worry if this is brief to start with.

### Making things easier

- Join in with what they enjoy playing with in the way they like to play, adding sounds, words or pauses.
- Give a child choice of activity using two objects or pictures.
- Use books that have interactive elements such as flaps or sounds.
- A first then board can be helpful for some children.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Occupational Therapy Team:  
[Attention and Listening Skills](#)  
Getting Engaged.



## Building relationships and communicating: Listening and following a simple instruction

- I enjoy action songs and rhymes and show awareness and anticipation.
- I can imitate actions.
- I can join in with action songs.
- I notice and respond to sounds I hear, for example a doorbell.
- I can respond to go and stop in play.
- I can follow an adult's familiar instruction when they help with objects, gestures or pictures.

### Things to help me grow

- Sing action songs and rhymes including ones like old McDonald you can use pictures or toy animals.
- Draw attention to environmental sounds.
- Play ready steady go, and go and stop games.
- Give simple instructions when doing day to day tasks and in play supported by natural gestures.

### Making things easier

- Use first then board to support routine instructions.
- Use gestures or pictures to support instructions in play or routine.

### Helpful Links:

Cambridgeshire Community Paediatrics  
Speech and Language Therapy:  
[Attention and Listening Skills](#)  
[Understanding Language.](#)



## Building relationships and communicating: Recognising the pattern of their name

- I can recognise pictures including a photo of myself.
- I make marks to develop my early writing skills.
- I recognise packets of favourite foods or icons for apps.
- I show awareness of print in the environment, for example road signs and such as Tesco or McDonalds.
- Shows an awareness of text in books.

### Things to help me grow

- Help the child notice signs, written words or logos when out and about.
- Give a variety of mark making tools.
- Modelling writing in meaningful contexts, for example a shopping list.
- Taking mark making tools when out and about.
- Have the child's name available or draw attention to it in meaningful contexts, for example writing name in birthday card.

### Making things easier

- Use mark making tools that do not need much pressure, for example soft wax crayons or pens.
- When labelling clothes or lunch boxes initially adding a picture or photo as well can help independent recognition.

### Helpful Links:

Talking Together Resources.



## Building relationships and communicating: Carrying on even when a task is difficult

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- I communicate frustration or I am finding something difficult through body language and expression.
- I communicate frustration through my behaviour and actions.
- I am asserting my independence.
- I begin to accept help and try new ways of doing things when supported by an adult.

### Things to help me grow

- Tune in and respond to when a child is becoming frustrated or needs help, offer encouragement to continue.
- Be sensitive in when to step in to support child allowing them their independence but reducing frustration.
- Name children's emotions when they are expressing them by actions or body language.
- Name children's emotions when they are expressing them by actions or body language.
- Modelling the word and sign help when needed.

### Making things easier

- Adapt activities or use backward chaining to make activities achievable.
- Visuals such as first then boards or task boards.

### Helpful Links:

[First then board.](#)

[Flip task board.](#)



## Building relationships and communicating: Exploring feelings

- I express my feelings through body language and sounds.
- I express my feelings using exaggerated facial expressions.
- I show awareness of the feelings of others, for example comforting someone who is upset.
- I can communicate feelings in play.
- I use signs or words to comment on or communicate feelings.

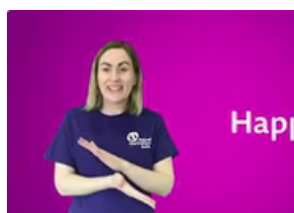
### Things to help me grow

- Model the use of feelings signs and words (decide key words you will use) in play and during everyday situations.
- Name children's emotions when they are expressing them by actions or body language.
- Explore facial expressions in the mirror, naming those that may express feelings.
- Explore feelings in simple role play situations, for example baby crying, baby sad.
- Use books to explore feelings.

### Making things easier

- Have pictures or symbols of emotions to support communicating emotions.
- Use signs to support understanding feelings and ability to communicate.

### Helpful Links:



## Building relationships and communicating: Learning to say no

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Children usually begin to communicate no through body language and sounds long before they are able to say any words. Later on they may communicate no through actions such as pushing or hitting, even when they are able to say no they are likely to still use these behaviours when they are cross or upset.

### Things to help me grow

- Tune into children's body language and sounds when they are communicating no.
- Although there will be times a child needs to do something even when they communicate no, particularly around safety, when possible allow a child's no to mean no.
- Give the child choices rather than instructions where possible so that they learn their voice is responded to.
- Play games to practice using the word no in different contexts, for example hide and seek is Harry under the box... no.

### Making things easier

- Have yes and no symbols (red and green coloured can work well to support understanding).

### Helpful Links:

[Choices and instructions.](#)

