

▶ Play opportunities and how they promote children's development

Introduction

Early years settings provide children with a wide range of play opportunities. This is because different resources and games are good for promoting different areas of development.

Discussion point

Think about an early years setting that you know. In pairs, write down five different toys and resources that you might expect to see.



In this section we look at the different types of play opportunities that are usually provided in early years settings for different ages of children. Each play opportunity helps children to gain certain skills which will support their development (physical, cognitive, language and communication, emotional and social). For children to master skills and concepts, the toys, activities and resources have to be right for their age and stage of development.

▶ Play opportunities from birth up to 2 years

Babies and toddlers need a wide range of play opportunities that allow them to gain physical skills and to explore textures. They also need play opportunities with adults that allow them to learn that play is enjoyable.

Key terms

Fine motor movements – small movements usually associated with the hands.

Gross motor movements – large movements of the arms and legs.



Physical play

Physical play encourages babies and toddlers to move and to learn to coordinate their movements. Play opportunities need to help children's **fine motor movements** and also their **gross motor movements**. Once babies are mobile and they are more coordinated, they need more challenging opportunities.

Activity 2.1

The table shows some of the toys and resources that might be used in physical play to support babies who are not yet mobile and older children. Look at a toy catalogue and see if you can add to the list.

	Toys that support fine motor movements	Toys that support gross motor movements
Non-mobile babies	Rattles Soft toys	Baby gym Baby bouncer
Mobile babies and toddlers	Stacking beakers	Push-and-pull toys Balls