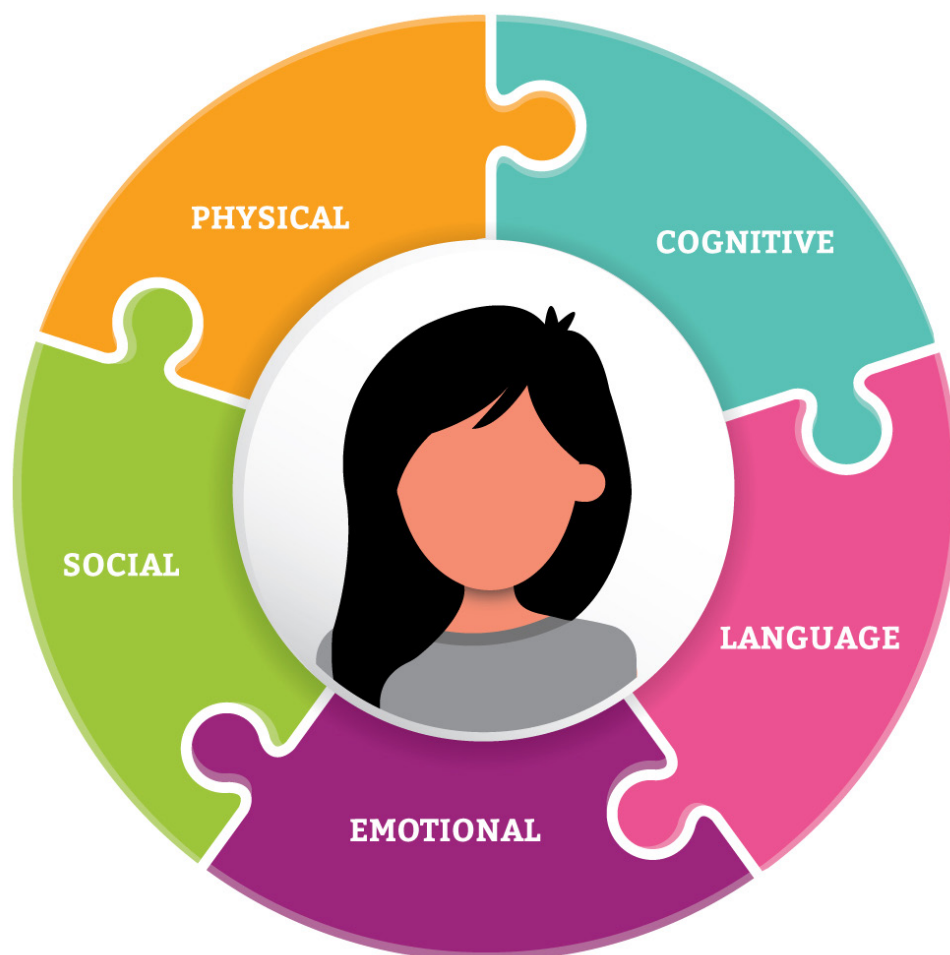


# FIVE DOMAINS OF Early Childhood Development

*Nature is inseparable from nurture. Both nature and nurture are sources of potential and growth as well as risks of developmental challenges and problematic behaviour. When babies receive consistent, responsive care and attention from nurturing adults, they are able to develop holistically, reaching their full potential. A child's starting point at birth can be positively moulded and shaped by the quality of the environment through the five domains – physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language.*

*How a child is developing in one domain also influences development in other domains. For example, as a child's language skills improve, they gain an increased understanding of the world around them.*



# Physical Development

Physical development refers to the growth and skill development of a child's body, including the brain, muscles, and senses. It involves the senses (taste, touch, sight, smell, hearing, and proprioception — or bodily awareness of one's orientation in space), gross motor skills (movements involving large muscles such as walking or crawling), and fine motor skills (movements involving small muscles such as holding the feeding bottle).

## Infants

- Engage the baby in tummy time to build neck and upper body strength, holding and grasping items for grip strength.
- Create safe areas for infants to crawl around and explore. Put toys around them to encourage movement. Every new shape, colour, texture, taste and sound is a learning experience for them. Giving them toys that are stimulating will help them discover their senses.
- To develop grip strength, offer opportunities for infants to reach and grab for things (e.g. teething rings, sucking toys, and rattles).
- Play with a ball and roll it back and forth to promote hand-eye coordination.
- Support infants' bodies and heads when you hold them.
- Make eye contact when you talk and play with them.
- Provide many opportunities to practice and use new skills, such as sitting up on your lap as you support an infant's neck and back (beginning 4 months).

## Toddlers

- Introduce toddlers to building and stacking toys. This promotes fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination.
- Give them cause and effect toys with buttons to push, knobs to twist and turn, handles to grasp, or moving parts. Cause and effect toys are interactive toys that require a child to do something to cause a dynamic reaction such as sound, lights, or movement. They teach children that their actions can affect their environment.
- Provide lots of fun bath toys for dunking, measuring, and pouring. Plastic milk bottles and food containers work just as well as store-bought toys.
- Give the child opportunities to practice walking, balancing, riding, pedalling, and steering a toy.
- Model how to safely walk up and down stairs, using the handrail.



## Preschoolers

- Offer opportunities for running and stopping for spatial awareness.
- Encourage them to get creative. Do arts and crafts projects using playdough and other age-appropriate activities.
- Draw and write with them. Watch for correct grip, and show them the proper way to hold the pencil or crayon incorrectly. Shorter writing instruments are better for promoting the correct grip. Set up an obstacle course for them to run around. Watch for how well they are able to move around the objects and then start again.
- Allow them to help with simple household chores.



# Cognitive Development

The cognitive domain of development looks at a child's ability to mentally process information — to think and understand what's happening around them. From 0 to 2 years, babies are limited to perceiving the world on a purely sensory level. By the time a child reaches 2-6 years, they are beginning to incorporate language into their interactions with others.

## Infants

- Read books, sing songs, and recite nursery rhymes together. Babies enjoy cloth books with different textures, flaps and puppets. Point out simple shapes and colours as you read to them and allow them to turn the pages of a book.
- Identify opportunities throughout the day to practice counting. A child's counting skills start with understanding sequence. At this age, the baby will learn about sequence through their daily routines.



## Toddlers

- Help them identify letters by singing along to the "Alphabet Song," reading books about the alphabet and playing with alphabet puzzles.
- Organize toys during cleanup by colour and encourage them to count.
- Identify shapes and colours when interacting with the child. As they get older, you can ask them to describe objects to you.
- Have them identify noises that they hear throughout the day (e.g. a car horn, a dog barking, or running water). This allows them to understand how sounds relate to objects in their everyday environment.
- Ask questions to help them develop critical thinking and problem skills. This will help children better understand how their environment works.
- Playing with everyday household items is educational, fun and cost-effective. Encourage them to match various-sized lids to their accompanying containers or have them look in a mirror and point to his nose, mouth, eyes, etc.

## Preschoolers

- When you can, offer them choices. This will help them to feel more independent and learn to make confident decisions that affect their day.
- Use their daily routines to teach sequencing skills and to help them develop a sense of time.
- Engage in simple math like simple addition and subtraction in daily routines as well as measuring things.
- Play simple card games or board games to allow them to intellectually work through a problem to find the answer or a solution. This will increase a child's confidence and makes them very proud of their discovery.
- Put puzzles together to provide them with opportunities to hone their problem-solving skills.
- Engage in imaginary play to help them develop their natural curiosity about the world.





# Social Development

As a child develops within the social domain, they learn how to build relationships and read the social cues of others.

## Infants

- Babies are born social creatures. Babble to them, play peek-a-boo, and encourage responses. Don't forget to pause so the baby can respond with a smile or a coo!
- When interacting with them, engage in eye contact to help them associate it with communication. Connecting visually is an important part of meaningful interactions.



## Toddlers

- Involve them in your daily activities. This allows you to model how to interact with others in respectful, positive ways.
- Encourage group play. In the event of a conflict, help children communicate their boundaries using words such as "stop" or "no" when someone is doing something they don't like.
- Arrange playdates so that the child can interact with other children. Encourage them to address others by their names.
- Give children lots of positive reinforcement when they play respectfully with other children.



## Preschoolers

- Model cooperation and empathy. Help children develop their confidence by encouraging group activities.
- Create space and opportunity for unstructured play. Give them words they can use when they want to join a group play activity. For example, "I see you want to play tag with our neighbours. You can go ask to join the game."
- Experience and discuss stories together. Taking time to discuss stories is a great way to model turn-taking, listening and respectful communication.



# Emotional Development

The emotional domain looks at a child's abilities related to understanding and regulating their emotions.

## Infants

- Exaggerate your facial expressions and enthusiasm when interacting with infants. Talk to them using different tones of voice and facial expressions, such as a surprised, happy, silly, or sad face. Observe how they react to different expressions and voice tones.
- Model empathy by talking gently to, and holding them, when they are upset.



## Toddlers

- Offer toddlers specific language to help them identify their emotions as they are happening. Describe how a character in a book or a show is feeling to help them relate. Ask why they think the character feels that way. Demonstrate the emotion through your tone of voice and facial expression.
- Snuggle with them while looking at photos together. Ask them to tell you what is happening in the picture and to describe what each person is feeling. You may need to help them find the exact words they need.



## Preschoolers

- Encourage conversations around why they feel a certain way. Model mindfulness and self-awareness to show different ways to feel better.
- If the child is angry or sad, encourage them to talk about why they are feeling this way. Talk about how you make yourself feel better when you are upset. This helps the child know that everyone feels upset sometimes and that there are ways we can make ourselves feel better. For example, you can encourage them to hold a favourite toy, take some deep breaths, or count to 10 when they are upset.
- Start having conversations with them about how their behaviour can make other people feel happy, sad, or angry. Foster their understanding of emotions by explaining that they can tell how people feel by their facial expressions, tone of voice, or actions. Practice strategies for recognizing emotions with them.





# Language Development

The language domain of development focuses on the child's ability to comprehend and use language to communicate their wants and needs. The development of verbal communication skills can vary between children but by two years, many toddlers are capable of forming simple sentences.

## Infants

- Talk to the child and hold eye contact as you talk with them. Listen and repeat their babblings and give them time to respond. Mutual eye contact helps develop better bonding and establishes an understanding of the norms of communication.
- Use gestures as you talk to them. With consistency, they will use the same gestures when they talk to you.
- Read to them like you're talking to them. Hold eye contact and use hand gestures to help infants understand verbal communication. Allow them to hold the book and explore it. Observe how they hold the book, if they turn the pages, how they look at the pages as they go through the book, etc.
- Read with expression. Change voices for different characters. Let your tone and volume reflect what's happening in the story.



## Toddlers

- Encourage them to play and interact with other children. Peer learning promotes language development.
- Read, sing, repeat! Allow toddlers to repeat their favourite songs and stories to you. As you read with them, ask questions about the story and the characters.
- Encourage them to scribble and draw pictures. This is how communicating through writing starts. For example, invite them to draw pictures about what happened during their day at school and write notes to family and friends.



## Preschoolers

- When reading a book or watching a movie, engage preschoolers in the storytelling process by pausing to ask them to interpret what's going on. Ask open-ended questions and have frequent conversations to help build their vocabulary. You can ask comprehension questions about the story, why they think a character did something or what they think will happen next.
- Encourage them to write notes to loved ones, stories about what happened in their day, shopping lists, or anything that interests them.
- Play word games with them. For example, give them a word and ask them to give you a word that rhymes with it, or ask them to give words that start with a specific letter.
- Have them read to you. Ask questions, make comments, and ask for predictions as they read.

