

Independence at The Den

An important part of The Den's philosophy is that children should play and contribute to the daily activities with an appropriate level of independence. Children should settle into playing quickly and staff should provide support and intervention where aimlessness appears.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), promoting independence involves supporting children to become self-reliant, confident, and capable learners. This includes encouraging them to make choices, solve problems, and take age-appropriate risks. It also involves helping them develop self-care skills, manage their emotions, and build positive relationships.

Key aspects of promoting independence in EYFS:

- **Encouraging choices and decision-making:**
Providing opportunities for children to make choices about their play, activities, and resources fosters a sense of ownership and control.
- **Supporting self-care skills:**
Helping children learn to dress themselves, manage toileting, and feed themselves are important steps in building independence.
- **Fostering problem-solving and risk-taking:**
Encouraging children to try new things, explore their environment, and solve problems independently builds confidence and resilience.
- **Developing a positive sense of self:**
Activities that promote self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence are crucial for fostering independence.
- **Building effective communication skills:**
Helping children express their needs, feelings, and ideas clearly and confidently is essential for navigating social situations independently.
- **Providing an enabling environment:**
Ensuring that the learning environment is well-organized and accessible allows children to independently access resources and materials.
- **Scaffolding learning:**
Providing appropriate support and guidance to help children gradually develop new skills and independence.
- **Celebrating effort and perseverance:**
Recognizing and praising children's attempts and efforts, even if they don't always succeed, helps them build confidence and resilience.
- **Working with parents:**
Collaborating with parents to establish consistent expectations and support at home and in the setting is crucial for promoting independence.

In practice:

- Children are unique with different dispositions with different ways of playing and learning. Activities need to be planned to meet the diverse needs of the group and the age range.
- Activities should be flexible so that children can 'run' with independent ideas. For example: in a craft activity some may wish to follow set instructions and need guidance and help to reach an end product, some may want to be more creative and place their own stamp on their piece some may wish to use the materials presented in creating something entirely different!
- Activity length needs consideration – some children can lose focus quickly: is there an extension/deviation task?
- Catering for the three Modalities: is the activity catering for **visual, kinaesthetic, auditory**?
- Ensuring the environment stays vibrant and 'live'.
- Changing the environment – big focus on outdoor play.
- Choice – providing a limited range of activities set up that allow children to choose their activity.

- Staff – maintain a passion for education! For example – not just introducing an activity but perhaps starting with a play, story, and mysterious happenings!
- Involving kids right from the start helps generate & sustain interest: arranging for resources & materials [collecting & getting from home, etc.], organising into groups, distribution, etc. finally, the end-product should be displayed/show-cased and awarded/complimented.
- The key to maintaining challenge and interest lies in supporting children's play and learning as an individual.
- Create a routine so that children have a role to play.
- Children are part of the group – helping with food preparation and making their own food creations.
- Children are part of the wider community – recycling.
- Active Listening
- Being approachable, adaptable and flexible,
- Planning, evaluating.

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