



This glossary explains some of the common terms used in early years education that might be unfamiliar to someone who has not previously worked with this age group.

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| Adult-directed/adult-led activity | An activity where the adult takes the lead, offering guidance and support to the children as they take part. The adult may or may not take part in the activity themselves, but they will be guiding and supporting the children throughout. |
| Authentic experience | The practice of using 'real' objects in early years activities, e.g. everyday objects, natural materials. |
| Child-initiated/child-led play | Child-led play is driven by the children's own interests and ideas. They choose the resources, setting, and type of play, while adults observe and interact as needed. |
| Continuous provision | Continuous provision describes the resources and learning areas that remain accessible for children to use and explore every day. |
| Day nursery | A nursery that provides childcare for babies and children up to school age. |
| Enabling environment | A well-planned space (indoor or outdoor) that supports children's learning and development and offers a variety of opportunities for children to explore, play, and develop. |
| Fine motor skills | The coordination of small muscles, especially in the hands, fingers and wrists, to perform precise tasks. They are important for writing and for independence in everyday activities. |
| Gross motor skills | Movements that involve the large muscle groups in the arms, legs, and torso, enabling large-scale movements like walking, running or jumping. |

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| Independent activity | An activity that a child carries out on their own. It may be set up by an adult or chosen and led by the child. |
| Key person | Each early years child will have a key person in their nursery or school who is responsible for the child's individual learning and development. |
| Learning journals/ journeys/tapestries/ floorbooks | Nurseries and schools will often keep records of children's learning that include photos and videos to document engagement and progress. This may happen during your music sessions, so if you don't want to be photographed you will need to let the nursery/school staff know. While photos don't provide a record of musical progress, they can be a good talking point for children and aid their recollection. |
| Mark making | Mark making describes the spontaneous marks that young children make, including lines, dots, and shapes. This supports the development of coordination, creativity, and early writing skills. |
| Meithrin | A Welsh-language nursery. |
| Observation | The practice of watching children as they take part in play or activities, whether self-initiated or adult-led. Observations help practitioners understand each child's development and plan appropriate next steps in their learning. |
| Preschool | An early years setting for children aged 2 to 5 years that prepares children for school. |
| Scaffolding | A teaching strategy developed by the psychologist Vygotsky where the teacher gives the learner temporary support to help them build upon what they can already do, then gradually removes the support as the learner becomes more proficient. |
| Sensory play | Any activity that engages a child's senses – touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste. These activities promote brain development, language and cognitive growth, and coordination of both fine and gross motor skills. |
| Setting | A setting is a provision of care and education for early years children, and includes day nurseries, preschools, and nursery/reception classes in primary schools, as well as childminders. |