

Supporting relationships

An important role of the early years practitioner is to support children's social development. You need to know how theories can be applied to early years practice.

Positive relationships

Here are four ways that practitioners can support positive relationships.

1

Cooperation and collaboration

- Introduce games and activities that require turn taking.
- Provide home or shop play to encourage communication and cooperation to act out roles.
- Organise joint projects such as planting a garden or creating an art activity.

3

Modelling behaviour

- Be playful with babies to develop a positive relationship.
- Play alongside children to model ways to interact with others, including turn taking and being fair.
- Help children to use manners and show consideration to others.
- Build effective partnerships with the child and their parents.

2

Rules and boundaries

- Get children to agree rules for their play so they are more likely to follow them.
- Show, as well as tell, children what is expected of them.
- Give reminders or use pictures, such as the number of children playing in the sand.

4

Dealing with conflict

- Use circle time to explore concepts such as fairness.
- Allow children time to resolve their own conflicts (if safe to do so) before stepping in.
- Talk to children about ways they resolved a problem.
- Use stories to illustrate ways to resolve conflict.

Bandura

Bandura's social learning theory is based on **observations** of children showing that their behaviour is conditioned by what they see others doing. This theory helps to explain the importance of modelling behaviours that, in turn, help to build friendships and relationships. Children will copy ways to interact appropriately such as taking turns or resolving conflict, which will help them to make friends.



To revise more on Bandura, see page 30.

Bronfenbrenner

Bronfenbrenner's model is based on the belief that everything in the environment has a direct, or indirect, influence on growth and development.

The **microsystem** is the child's immediate environment. Supporting friendships and relationships in the early years setting and their home is critical for their overall development.

The **mesosystem** describes the importance of the strong links between the child's immediate environments, for instance home and early years setting, for positive growth and development. This helps to explain the importance of the key person building relationships with the whole family.



To revise more on Bronfenbrenner, see page 31.

Now try this

Suggest an activity you could use in circle time to help children to explore how to deal with conflict.

Stages of play

Play is important for the development of friendships and relationships with others.

Play

- All children play.
- Babies start to play from the first few months of life.
- Play is particularly important in early childhood for emotional and social development.

Play progression

All children pass through these stages but the age they do so may vary. Initially children play alone, then alongside other children and eventually they share and cooperate during play.

Birth to 2 years old: solo play

In **solo play** children play alone with toys such as rattles, shakers and balls. They may be aware that other babies are present but do not attempt to play with them.



This child is engrossed in his own play.



These children are playing next to each other but involved in their own play.

Stages of play in infancy and early childhood



These children are sharing, talking and playing together.

2 to 3 years old: parallel play

During **parallel play** children are aware of other children and they may copy each other but they are not interacting. They will enjoy sand and water play, building blocks and small-world toys.

3 years old and over: cooperative play

In **cooperative play** children share ideas and resources in the same activity. They enjoy domestic and imaginative play where they can interact with each other to agree roles to develop their play towards a shared goal.

Links to Bruner

Bruner's three modes of cognitive representation help to explain the stages of play.

- At the **enactive stage** children are learning through the physical actions they use in their play.
- At the **iconic stage** they use one thing to represent another in their play.
- At the **symbolic stage** they can use abstract symbols to represent ideas in their play.



Links

To revise Bruner's three modes of cognitive representation, see page 18.

Links to Piaget

Piaget's stages of learning help to explain the stages of play.

- At the **pre-operational stage** (2 to 7 years old) children take part in pretend play and use symbols – one thing to stand for another – such as a stick representing a spoon.
- Using **symbolic play** helps children to take part in cooperative play.



Links

To revise Piaget's stages of learning, see page 20.

Now try this

Tim is 20 months old. Identify suitable toys and resources that could be provided to encourage parallel play alongside his brother who is 3 years old.

Understanding self

Difficulties in children's emotional development can have consequences for other areas of development. Theories are used in early years settings to support children's understanding of self and others.

Support

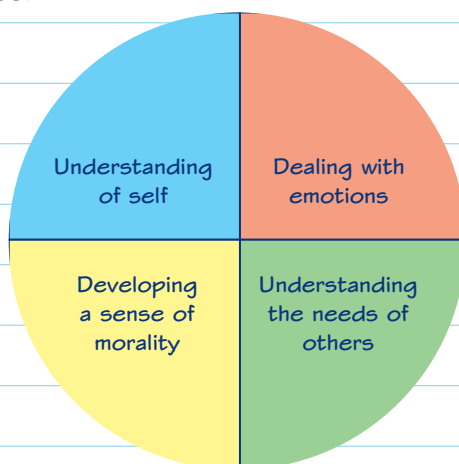
Here are ways that practitioners can support **emotional development**.

Understanding of self

- Use praise to help children feel positive about themselves.
- Acknowledge children's individuality, including their home language.
- Build self-esteem through provision of age-appropriate activities in which they can succeed.

Developing a sense of morality

- Help children to think about alternative actions.
- Model positive behaviour and point out positive behaviour in children.



Dealing with emotions

- Give children individual attention to talk through how they feel.
- Give children words to help them to express their feelings.
- Use art activities or physical play to help to express feelings.

Understanding the needs of others

- Use stories to explore the feelings of characters that children identify with.
- Talk to pairs or small groups of children about how they feel following conflict.

Theories

These four theories help to explain early years practice.

1 Bowlby and Ainsworth's theories of attachment explain how strong attachments can be developed between the child and their main carer. The **key person system** is important to ensure that each child's individual emotional needs are understood and met. If the key person knows the child well, it reduces stress when they are settling in to the setting. It also ensures that there is continuity of care between home and the setting.

2 Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory explains the importance of the interrelationship between home and the early setting. **Inviting parents or carers** into the setting and talking to parents about their children's needs and interests ensure that the child is understood and that there is continuity in care. The key person can work with the family to support their child's emotional development, such as their self-esteem and ability to deal with emotions.

3 Piaget's stages of moral development explain that from birth to 4 years old children learn right from wrong through their actions. From 4 years to 10 years, children believe that there are rules set by adults which are unchanging. Their actions are influenced by adult approval. By 7 years, children understand the concept of fairness and follow rules of play. Practitioners should model positive behaviour and show consistency in their responses. Children should be supported to agree rules for play.

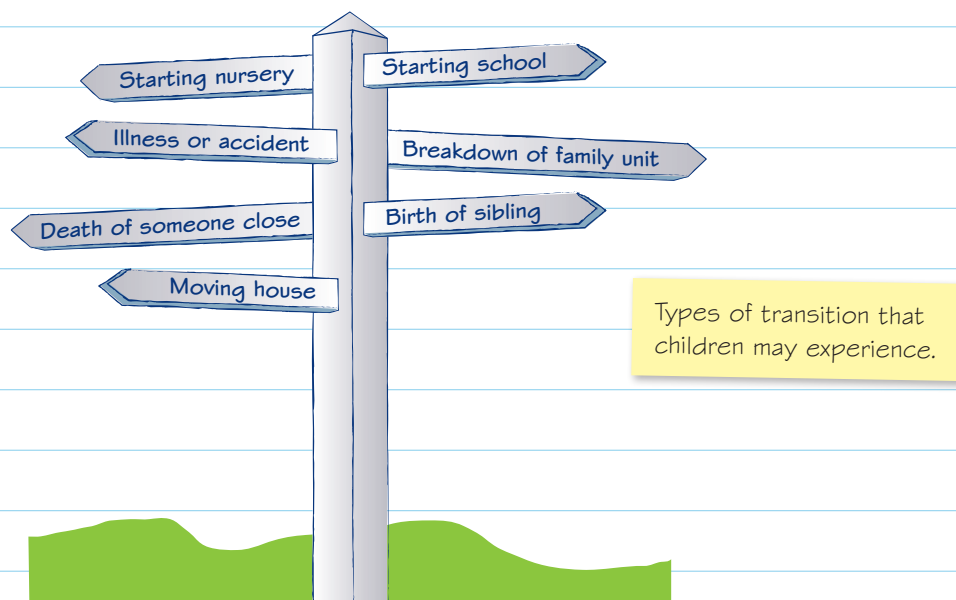
4 Bandura's social learning theory explains how children learn by **watching** others. Modelling positive behaviour and showing sympathy and empathy with others will help children to develop a sense of morality.

Now try this

Give a further example of how early years practitioners can support each of the four theories relating to emotional development above.

Transitions

Everyone experiences transitions in their life that impact on their development. A transition such as starting school is expected and can be planned for. Transitions such as the break-up of the parents are unexpected.



Predictable transitions

These are life events that:

- are **likely** to happen to most children, such as starting nursery or school
- can be **anticipated** and **prepared** for.

Predictable events often have **positive effects**, particularly if children are starting new experiences they are looking forward to. They can help to build confidence and self-esteem. Transitions give opportunities to learn through new experiences and enable children to build new relationships. Although predictable events are expected, they can cause anxiety when routines change that may affect emotional development.

Unpredictable transitions

These are life events that:

- are **not expected**, such as **sudden** illness or injury of the child or their carer
- happen with **little or no warning** so **cannot be prepared** for.

Unpredictable events mean **changes** to a child's routines and sometimes mean separation from a main carer or from someone close to them.

Sudden changes can cause stress and anxiety which may impact on a child's sleep and eating patterns, affecting growth, concentration and the ability to learn. Unexpected transitions can affect a child's development in the short and long term. Negative effects can be minimised by helping children to prepare for transitions whenever possible.

Now try this

Anjana, who is 4 years old, is an only child. Her mother is expecting a baby in a few weeks' time.

- 1 Give **one** positive and **one** negative example of how Anjana's development may be affected by the arrival of the baby.
- 2 Suggest **two** ways to help Anjana to prepare for the transition.

Early years theories

Theories based on research of child development contribute to the development of early years practice.

Curriculum frameworks

Here are six aspects of an effective early years framework and how they are influenced by theories.

1

Children are unique

Growth and development is influenced by **nature** (genetics) and **nurture** (the environment and experiences).

- **Early years practitioners** must be aware of, and take account of, children's individual needs.
- **The role of the key person** is critical for an understanding of the individual child.

2

Enabling environments

Children are **active learners** so must be provided with a range of materials, resources and opportunities for play (Piaget).

- **Provide a range** of sensory materials.
- **Design interesting areas** indoors and outdoors that encourage children to explore.
- **Design areas for play** where children can choose and access their own resources.

3

Balanced curriculum

Children need time to explore and construct their thoughts (Piaget). Social interaction with an adult or more able child can help to develop thought processes (Vygotsky and Bruner).

- **Provide a balance** of child-initiated and adult-led activities.
- **Give time** for children to explore materials and play imaginatively.
- **Use sensitive interaction** to support children to develop ideas and build on what they already know and can do.

4

Positive relationships

Children's development is affected by insecure attachments. **Early attachments** provide a model for attachments in later life (Bowlby's theory of attachment). The **interrelationship** between parents and the early years setting impacts on children's holistic development (Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory).

- **Appoint a key person** for developing positive relationships with the child and their family.

5

Planning and assessment

Children pass through stages of development (Piaget's stages of learning and Bruner's three modes of representation). Children can be supported by an adult to progress to the next stage of learning by knowing (Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development).

- **Monitor** growth and development through observation and assessment.
- **Use assessment** for early recognition of atypical development.
- **Produce individual** support plans.

6

Safety and security

For children to be able to reach their **full potential** they must have their **basic needs** met (Maslow's hierarchy of needs).

- **Assess risk** and develop policies and procedures to keep children safe and secure.
- **Plan routines** to include sleep, rest, a nutritious diet and exercise for growth and physical development.
- **Use observation** to identify children who may be at risk of harm or abuse.

Now try this

Working closely with parents can lead to positive outcomes for children's development. Give **two** reasons why this should be the case, using theories to support your answers.

Your Unit 1 exam

Your Unit 1 exam will be set by Pearson and could cover any of the essential content in the unit. You can revise the unit content in this Revision Guide. This skills section is designed to **revise skills** that might be needed in your exam. The section uses selected content and outcomes to provide examples of ways of applying your skills.

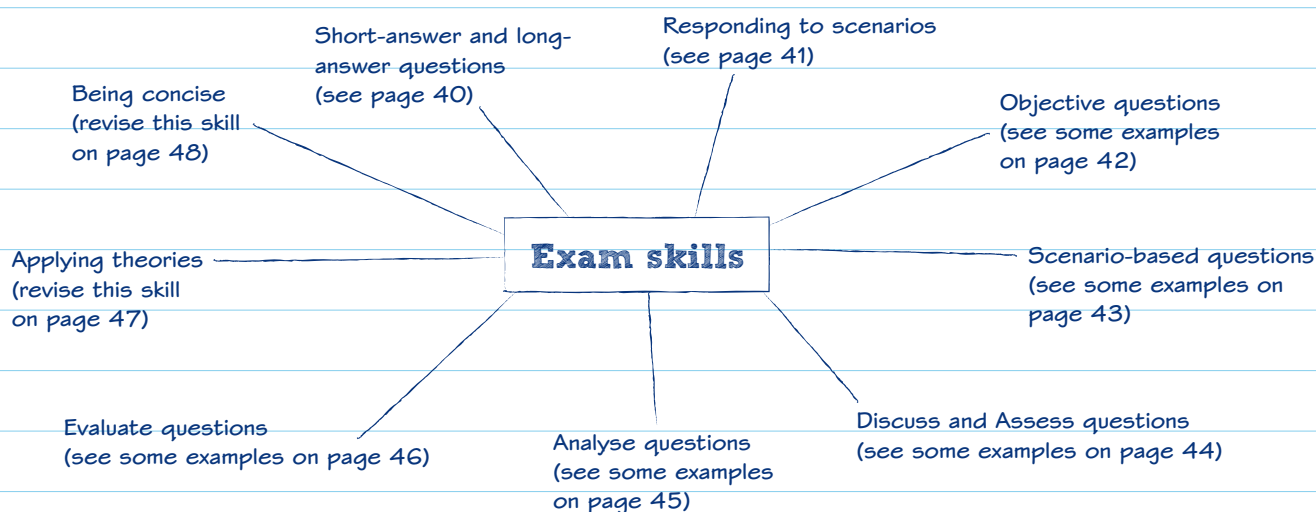
Exam checklist

Before your exam, make sure you:

- ✓ have a black pen you like and at least one spare
- ✓ have double-checked the time and date of your exam
- ✓ get a good night's sleep.

Check the Pearson website

The questions and sample response extracts in this section are provided to help you to revise content and skills. Ask your tutor or check the Pearson website for the most up-to-date **Sample Assessment Material** and **Mark Scheme** to get an indication of the structure of your actual paper and what this requires of you. The details of the actual exam may change so always make sure you are up to date.



Now try this

Visit the Pearson website and find the page containing the course materials for BTEC National Children's Play, Learning and Development. Look at the latest Unit 1 Sample Assessment Material (SAM) to get an indication of:

- the number of papers you have to take
- whether a paper is in parts
- how much time is allowed and how many marks are allocated
- what types of questions appear on the paper.

Your tutor or instructor may already have provided you with a copy of the Sample Assessment Material. You can use this as a 'mock' exam to practise before taking your actual exam.

Short- and long-answer questions

Here are some examples of skills involved when answering short or long answer questions.

Answering the questions

All questions will assess your understanding of how the principles, theories and models of development apply to individual children.

When responding to short-answer questions, show your ability to:

- read each scenario carefully
- apply theory to the practical, real-life situations
- relate your answer to each scenario.

When responding to long-answer questions, show your ability to:

- analyse and interpret theories, how they relate to other domains of development and their impact on early years practice
- plan and write detailed answers.



Links

To revise long-answer questions, see pages 43–47.

Worked example

Carly is 3½ years old. She goes to nursery each morning. Carly loves to join in with role play in the home corner or shop.

Describe two ways in which joining in with role play with other children will promote Carly's social skills.

4 marks

Sample response extract

- 1 When taking part in role play Carly will develop skills in negotiation to be able to take part in acting out roles and storylines in the play.
- 2 Carly will learn that she must cooperate with others so that she can share resources during the play.

Here is an example of a short-answer question. Read the scenario carefully.

The question relates to the child described in the scenario so your answer should refer to Carly.

The question asks for 'two ways'. Give two numbered points to show that you have described two different aspects of social development.



Links

Look at page 43 for more on **Describe** questions.

Now try this

Identify **two** language milestones that Carly should have reached.

To provide the correct response, you need to know the expected stage of language development.



Links

Look at page 16 to revise the content covered in this question.

Responding to scenarios

Scenarios may include one or more children in a family. They may include details such as **family background, age, skills and abilities, additional needs, environment or transitions**. Read each scenario carefully before answering any questions.

Applications

Scenarios enable you to apply your knowledge and understanding of the content of this unit to **realistic situations** and **contexts**. You may need to apply knowledge and understanding about:

- ☒ principles of growth and development
- ☒ patterns of physical, cognitive, emotional and social development from birth up to the age of 7 years 11 months
- ☒ factors that impact on children's growth and development
- ☒ theories that help to explain early years practice
- ☒ how early years practitioners can promote and support children's growth and development.

Worked example

Micah is 3 years old and meeting the expected milestones in physical development. He has just started nursery. The nursery has an outdoor play area with a climbing frame and ride-on toys.

Explain two aspects of Micah's gross motor skills at his age in relation to his ability to take part in outdoor play at nursery.

4 marks

Sample response extract

- 1 Micah will have developed the large muscles in his arms and legs which will help him to hold on to the climbing frame and push up with his legs to climb higher.
- 2 Micah will be developing his balance and coordination so will be able to pedal and control ride-on toys.

You could underline key words to help you to answer the question. In this example scenario, you could underline Micah's **age**, whether he is meeting his **expected milestones** and the types of **activities** he will take part in.

You should **recall your knowledge** of the gross motor physical skills a child will have acquired by the age of 3, **making links** to how Micah will use them to take part in the activities.

You should make sure that you **refer to Micah** and what he takes part in at nursery **specifically**, so that you do **not** give an answer about the general development of 3-year-olds.



To revise the content covered in this question see page 9, and for more about **Explain** questions see page 43.

Now try this

Identify the type of grasp that Micah would be expected to use when he draws a picture

- ☐ A simple tripod grasp
- ☐ B dynamic tripod grasp
- ☐ C pincer grasp
- ☐ D palmar grasp

You may be asked to choose the correct answer from a choice of four.



To revise the content of this question, see page 8.

Objective questions

Here are some examples of skills involved if answering objective questions.

Objective questions

You may be asked questions that use the **command** words: 'which', 'identify', 'give', 'list'.

- **Which:** you may need to select the correct item or feature from a definite set.
- **Identify:** you may need to indicate the main feature, purpose or qualities of something.
- **List:** you may need to give an item-by-item record.
- **Give:** you may need to give brief examples or a justification (reason) for something.

Features and facts

If answering objective questions, you must **recall** the **main features** or **facts** relating to children's development.

If you are unsure, do not spend too much time on your answer. Give the best answer you can and move on to a new question.

Worked example

Aarif is 3 years old and his sister Sadia is just 6 weeks old. Aarif goes to nursery. He enjoys sorting his cars into sets of different colours. He can say how many he has in a set up to five. Sadia is due for her 6-week developmental assessment.

(a) Which area of development is Aarif demonstrating?

1 mark

Sample response extract

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> social | <input type="checkbox"/> physical |
| <input type="checkbox"/> emotional | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> cognitive |

(b) List three measurements that the health visitor will take to check Sadia's growth during her assessment.

3 marks

Sample response extract

- 1 Weight
- 2 Head circumference
- 3 Length

(c) Identify two physical milestones that Aarif will be expected to achieve at his age.

2 marks

Sample response extract

- 1 Aarif will be able to run forwards and backwards.
- 2 Aarif will be able to balance when walking along a line.

Make sure you read the scenario carefully. In this example scenario, you are given information about two children at different ages and stages.

You need to recall the **areas of development** and draw a cross in the box against the **one** correct answer. If you make a mistake put a clear line through it like this ✕ and draw the cross in the correct box.

Only the types of measurement are needed in this answer. You do not need to give details of how these are taken or recorded.



To revise the content needed for this question, see page 1.

Read the question carefully. If you are asked for two milestones, don't give a greater number than asked for, so that you use your time wisely.

Now try this

Give **two** reasons why starting nursery will promote Aarif's emotional development.

'Give' questions might ask for a set number of reasons, as in this question, or a set number of examples.

Scenario-based questions

Here are some examples of skills involved when answering scenario-based questions. You may need to show your understanding of principles, patterns, theories or models of development and apply them to the context of a scenario. You might be asked to 'describe' or 'explain' (below) or to 'discuss' (see page 44).

Describe two ways that the information processing theory helps to explain Tommy's development.

4 marks

If answering a 'describe' question, give a **clear account** that shows **knowledge** of the facts and **main features** of the topic.

Explain two factors that may have impacted on Sam's physical development.

4 marks

If answering an 'explain' question, demonstrate that you can **apply** your understanding of the subject and context of the question by **giving reasons to support** your opinions, views or argument.

Worked example

Maisie, aged 3 years, and her brother Jamie, 12 months, attend Teddies Nursery. The staff provide plenty of opportunity for children to develop their play.

Describe two ways that Piaget's stages of cognitive development can help practitioners to support Maisie and Jamie's play.

4 marks

When reading a scenario, notice the key points. This example scenario includes the ages and stages of two children, a nursery context, and a focus development of play.

Read the questions carefully. This asks for Piaget's stages of development so you need to **recall** the **two stages** that relate to Maisie and Jamie's age.

Sample response extract

- 1 Up to the age of 2 years, children are in the sensorimotor stage. This means that Jamie will learn best through using all his senses so should be given lots of opportunity to explore different resources and materials in self-directed play.
- 2 According to Piaget, from the age of 2 years until the age of 7 children progress to the ~~sensorimotor stage~~ pre-operational stage. Maisie should be given resources and props in her play that she can use to symbolise real life objects and events.

Don't simply describe each stage. You need to **show** that you **understand** the stages by **relating** them to play provision in the nursery appropriate for each child, as shown in these answers.

If you make a mistake, show it clearly by striking through it and writing in the correct words.



Links To revise the content covered in this question, see page 20.

Now try this

Now try an **explain** question.

Helena is 2½ years old. She has advanced language skills for her age. She can name everyday objects and actions and is using simple sentences.

Explain **two** ways in which Helena's language skills will support her emotional development.

You need to give two separate ways and provide valid reasons for each.



Links To revise the content for this question, see page 4.