

Empowering children and encouraging independence

As an early years practitioner, it is important that you support children in your care to become confident, capable and resilient.

Empowering children and supporting their growing independence is key for building resilience and confidence, which enables them to bounce back from difficulties and remain motivated.

Here are some top tips to help you empower children and support their growing independence:

- Use the Characteristic of Effective Learning to reflect on how children learn – use this knowledge to engage, motivate and empower children to make their own choices
- Listen to and observe children, value what they are telling you and what you see, and actively use this to support them
- Create an environment where children have lots of opportunities to do things ‘hands on’, to enable them to develop and practice skills across a range of different experiences
- Review the environment to see if there are extra opportunities you could provide to support children’s growing independence. For example, are children able to access toilet rolls themselves if there are none available in the bathroom? Can they access an outdoor hose to refill containers or do they always need to ask an adult for help? Take this opportunity to look for any extra little ways you can support independence
- Encourage and support children as they face difficulties and challenges so they develop strategies and become more resilient
- Give children plenty of opportunities to think, reflect and respond before giving them the answer or solving a problem for them
- Provide choices for children, for example, where they would like to play and what they would like for a snack to empower them to make their own independent decisions. A self-service snack station is a good way to provide choice and develop independence
- Allow children to take risks appropriate to their age and stage of development. Taking risks is important for children to develop self-confidence and belief in their own abilities
- Involve children in decision making
- Label and praise children's acts of independence so they become more aware of this themselves, for example, ‘you got your wellies from your peg without me asking you, that’s really independent.’

