



Preparing for Life

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION



**Supporting Transitions
to Primary School**

About this resource

This resource was developed in response to early years educators identifying a need to support children and ease parental anxiety in relation to transition to school during the Covid19 crisis in 2020. Preparing for Life facilitated online learning sessions during this time where lots of examples of practice and ideas were shared by educators. As a result, a working group was developed to compile those ideas and provide educators and parents with inspiration and support to facilitate children's learning and development through play at home. The members of the working group also contributed ideas and resources from their own practice which have been incorporated into the document.

Who is this resource for?

This resource is designed for Early Years educators to provide activities that support children's development and help with the transition to school. This resource can also be shared with families. This document was developed during the 2020 "lockdown" however it has proven to have value and can be used in subsequent years.



How to use this document:

This document should be used to complement practice and support learning experiences in the home environment. The information is offered as inspiration and can be adapted or added to. The "Top Tips" are activities related to the named area of development and are useful for sharing with families. We recommend that information or activities are shared with families gradually in small and manageable intervals.

Preparing For Life Transitions Working Group

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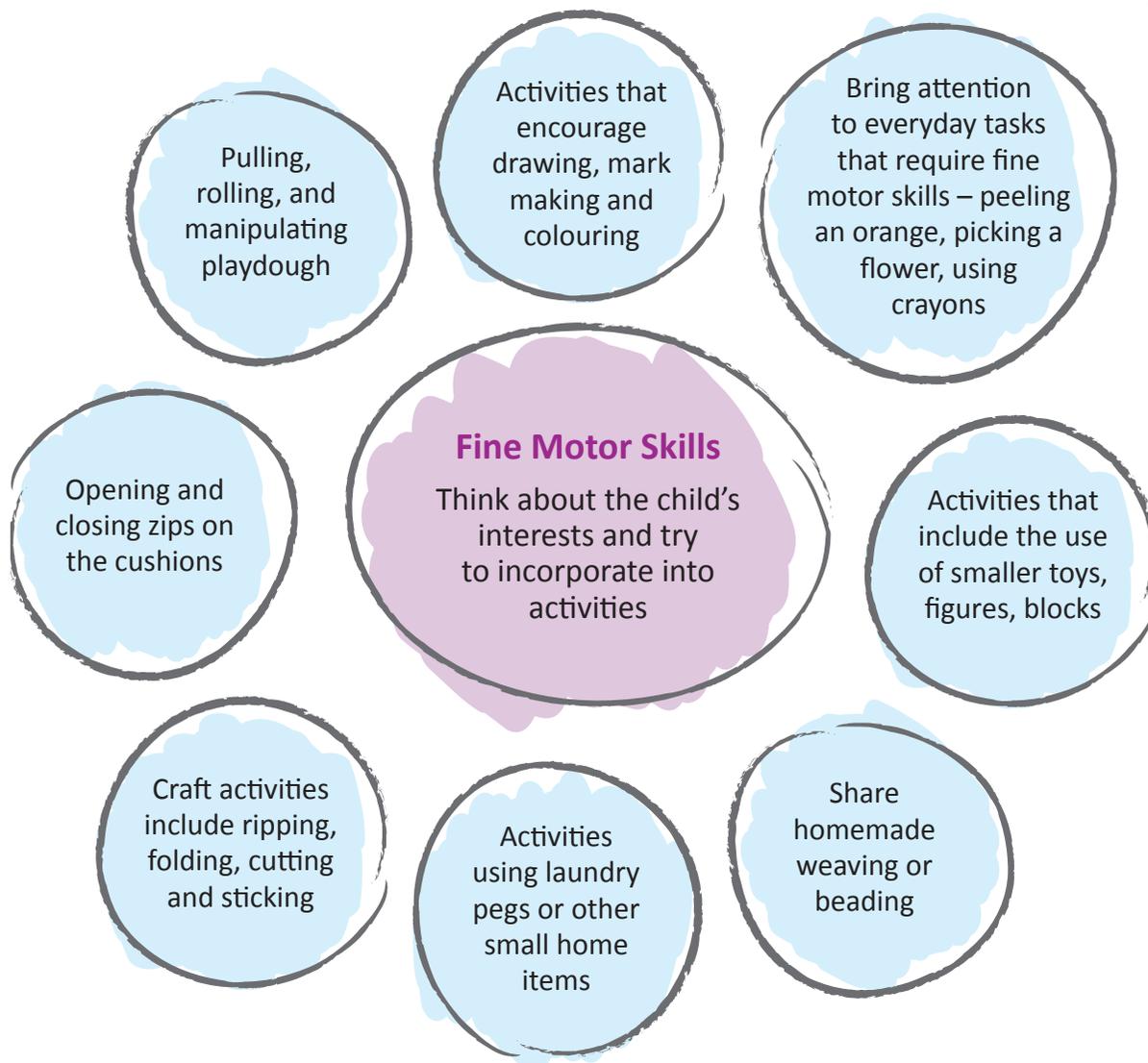
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Fine motor skills

Fine motor skills involve the use of hand and finger muscles to allow children to complete tasks that require precision, control, holding and manipulating small objects. Fine motor skills are important for school as they are needed to hold a pencil and to do things such as open a pencil case or lunch wrappings.



Top Tip

Send a recipe for homemade playdough and share how fine motor skills are practised playing with playdough

- 8 tbsp plain flour
- 2 tbsp table salt
- 60ml warm water
- water based paint
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil

Fine motor skills are practiced as children roll, pull, twist, shape, pinch, and manipulate the playdough. This helps to strengthen the muscles in the hands. Other skills are being practiced too!

Gross motor skills if they help to mix the ingredients. Bring in **science** and **numeracy** by letting them help to measure and combine ingredients.

Language skills by naming children's actions and talking about what they are making. **Social skills** by working together, turn taking and problem solving. **Thinking skills** wondering what other things are made by mixing ingredients together.



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Gross Motor Skills

Gross motor skills involve the larger body muscles to allow children to gain better control of their growing body. Gross motor skills are important in terms of school readiness as they are needed to move, play, sit at a desk, get dressed and undressed, carry a school bag and feel in control of their body.



Gross Motor Skills

Think about the child's ability and build on those existing skills

Games that require moving and jumping e.g., floor is lava

Running games or obstacle course

Record an exercise class or share a YouTube video

An activity of the week for whole family: go for a walk, play hopscotch, ride a bike or scooter and ask for photos to share

Incorporate into chores e.g. pulling washing from the machine

Activities that involve practicing skills such as putting on a coat or carrying backpack

Letting children carry heavier objects such as a bag of shopping

Pushing a trolley, pram or box of toys etc.

Top Tip

Share the preschool way of teaching children how to put on their coat by themselves

1. Place coat on the floor, coat facing up
2. Child stands at the hood
3. Child bends and places their arms into the sleeves of coat
4. Child flips coats up and over head

Success!!!!

Not only are children using large muscles in arms and legs to do this, they are also acquiring independent skills



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Language and Communication

Language and communication is not just about spoken language, it also involves listening and communication using body language. Language and communication skills are important for children's school readiness as it supports the ability to listen and reply, increase vocabulary range and lays the foundations for literacy skills.



Top Tip

TV and screens are a part of modern life. When used in moderation, they can be an opportunity to promote language and communication and a time for families to be together.

1. Try to pick tv shows you can watch together and where they use language correctly (or second languages/ sign language)
2. Ask the child to recall what happened in the show they watched. This helps to practice memory recall, or predict what is going to happen
3. Watch nature or science shows and discuss what you see and what you think or know about the topic
4. Visit online museums or zoos and introduce new words or ideas

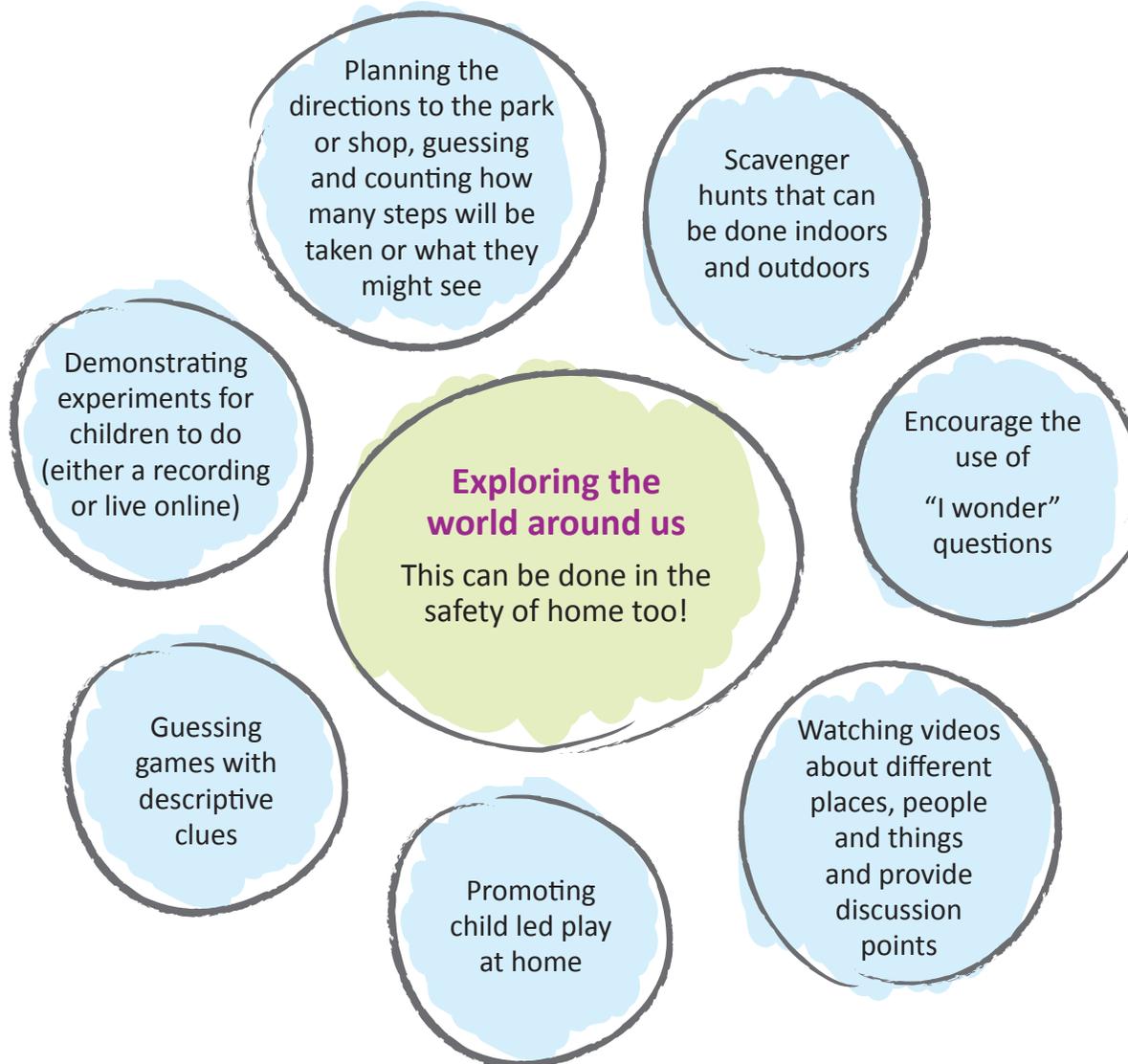


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Exploring the world around us

Consider how you can bring curiosity and wonder to activities that you share or suggest to families. Encouraging curiosity and wonder can also lead to critical thinking and problem solving, skills that are essential for learning and sustaining relationships.



Top Tip

Bringing thinking and exploring into daily walks.

Set a fun challenge for children to do while out on their walk with parents for example:

1. Draw a map of the route
2. Guess how many step it takes to get from one spot to another
3. Count steps and compare to original guess
4. List any animals or insects you see on your walk
5. What loud sounds do you hear on your walk? What quieter noises do you hear?

You know your families best and will probably have lots of suggestions to suit their interests.



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Social and emotional skills

Positive, loving, consistent and secure relationships help children to develop social and emotional skills that play a key role in school and life success. Social and emotional skills help children to explore and learn, build and sustain relationships and feel and manage emotions.



Social and emotional development

Starts with the adult feeling calm

Teaching children to find better ways of handling their emotional reactions 'it's ok to feel angry, but what could you do next time?'

How can you (educator) or parents regulate your own emotions so you can help children to regulate theirs

Naming a range of feelings during the day or play time

Sensory activation activities that can help regulations such as water play, playdough, gloop, smelling, tasting, moving

Encouraging children to reflect during a story 'how do you think the bear made her friend feel?' 'was that right or wrong?' etc.

Play games that require listening and following rules e.g. Simon Says, musical statues, eye spy, snakes and ladders

Practice social skills or scenarios through play such as sharing, listening and responding, joining play

Top Tip

Exploring emotions

1. Drawing about how we feel now, what we think about school, memories of preschool
2. Help children to identify and name their emotions and expand emotion vocabulary (happy, excited, sad, lonely, scared, angry, tired, frustrated, nervous, worried, embarrassed)
3. Naming the negative emotions is important too, we all have them!
4. Share your own feelings and coping strategies with children
5. Take photos of your faces showing different emotions and use them to recall and identify with emotions

Pre numeracy and literacy skills

There will be plenty of time in school for children to learn maths and literacy skills such as reading and writing. But there are things that we can support families to do with children at home to help build on pre numeracy and literacy skills that are important at this age and stage of development.



Identifying the letters from child's name in other words and using their body to make those letters

Playing 'eye spy' using clues that promote identifying letter, numbers, shapes and colours

Encouraging mark making and the captioning of drawing and pictures

Pre numeracy and literacy skills

Activities that lay foundations of literacy and numeracy skills

Sorting, matching and categorising activities at home e.g. doing the laundry or putting away the dishes

Baking, following a recipe (bringing attention to purpose of words) and counting out ingredients, concept of time

Getting ready for dinner, counting how many utensils and cutlery is needed, comparing shapes to other things

Encouraging the use of descriptive language during activities you share

Top Tip

The learning opportunities during shared family mealtimes

1. Guessing or predicting weight and using language like heavier and lighter... even using scales to find out exact weight
2. Counting how many plates, cups, cutlery is needed
3. Sorting cutlery and dishes by shapes, colours, sizes etc.
4. Comparing items like tea towels longer, shorter, wide, wider, widest.
5. Using timers to see how long it takes to set the table, can it be done quicker next time
6. Identifying letters in words on packaging
7. Having a chat as a family while eating, no technology, just listening and responding to each other



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Independence

Nurturing independence helps children to complete tasks by themselves, building their confidence and self-esteem. When children feel capable, they feel ready to take on the world! Sometimes when we feel under pressure it's quicker and easier to do things for our children, try taking time to show children how it's done and help with tidying up, help them to achieve it by themselves. Support families to support their child to become more independent.

Slowly reintroduce routine and use a visual routine to help the child adjust or use independently

Suggest that children lay out their clothes for the next day and dress themselves



If dressing themselves is still a challenge start off by dressing bears, toys, dolls etc. or one item of clothing

Independent skills

Requires lots of practice and positive encouragement

Sharing the problem solving approach to conflict with parents, think of games that encourage problem solving skills to be used

Stories, games, videos and songs about independence skills such as brushing their teeth, washing hands, tidying up.

Giving children small jobs and responsibilities at home

Top Tip

Keeping children in the routine of regular handwashing will help them to develop good handwashing habits.

Safe Foods Ireland has some fun videos and resources, why not try this song from Rufus

To the tune of 'Row, row, row your boat'

"Wash, wash, wash your hands,

Thumbs and fingers too,

Rinse and then make sure they're dry,

That's the thing to do!"

www.safefood.eu

Art and creativity

Providing opportunity for children to engage in different forms of art gives them different experiences of creativity and also a chance to express themselves in a different way. Creativity is not always about the end product, it can be about enjoying the process too!



Prompts

'tell me about your picture'

Be specific with praise

'You used blue and green together, that was a great idea'

Enjoying music together, listening for rhythms, patterns, and beats

Art can be created using recyclable items from home. It is about the process not the product

Art and creativity

Getting creative can be a good way of calming and connecting for families

Making instruments at home, instruments that make loud sounds and instruments that make quieter sounds

Look for art, patterns, images, sculptures etc. while out for a walk, in a book or watching tv

Give parents the skills to provide process-focused experiences (not about an end product)

Top Tip

Art comes in so many forms and provides endless opportunity for practice and development of many skills including fine and gross motor, language and communication, self-esteem, emotional regulation and more.

1. 'write' and draw to friends and family, or to your teacher
2. Make an art gallery at home by hanging children's pictures with pride
3. Caption children's work with their words (what they describe in their picture)
4. Encourage children to try (if they say they can't do something)
5. Art includes music, drama and dancing – anything that allows us to express ourselves

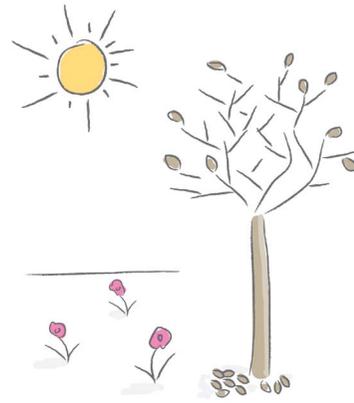


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Creative Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice that allows for paying attention to our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment in the present moment.



The benefits of Mindfulness

1. Strengthens self-control
2. Lower anxiety and stress levels
3. Increases positive moods
4. Better decision making
5. Increases self-esteem
6. Improves emotional regulation skills
7. Improves health and body image
8. Improves social and communication

Breathing exercise

1. Smell the flower and blow out the candle
2. Smell the hot chocolate and blow to cool
3. Blowing bubbles
4. Fill your belly balloon

Mindfulness eating

Describing smell, texture and taste of food

Kindness and gratitude

Saying 5 kind things about others, what are we grateful for?

Mindfulness with children

Guide Meditation

Listening to guided meditation on YouTube

Stressing and relaxing muscles

Squeeze and tighten your whole body and hold, then release

Noticing our world

1. shapes in the clouds
2. what do we hear when we are silent?
3. what do we see on our walks?
4. What does the grass smell like?
5. What does a tree feel like?

Inspiration Station

Creating Mind Jars

The purpose of this activity:

To help children become aware of how their brain behaves when they feel their big emotions. It acts as a visual aid and can also be suggested as a calming strategy when children feel overwhelmed or disregulated.

What you need?

1. Glitter (or little beads or buttons, or a mix!)
2. A jar or clear bottle with a lid
3. Water
4. Glue to seal the lid



Discuss with the child times they could use the jar to help them when their minds might be like a storm and encourage the child to use the mind jar at these times.

Suggested steps for this activity:

1. Gather various colours of glitter and discuss the child's different thoughts. Some prompt questions may be needed such as: What makes you happy? What makes you sad? What were you thinking when you woke up?
2. For each thought use a different colour glitter and allow the child to pour some glitter into the water.
3. Draw attention to the glitter calmly floating in the water and explain that the colours are all of the different thoughts and feelings we have every day.
4. Continue to explain sometimes there is a storm in our mind and give the jar and good shake making the glitter swirl fast in the water. Practice deep breathing while waiting for the 'storm' to settle
5. Explain to the child when our minds are stormy like the jar, it makes it hard for us to feel good or make good choices. If we practice our breathing our storm will pass, just like the glitter eventually sinks to the bottom. Our mind and feelings calm, and we can think better.
6. This must then be demonstrated with the child a couple of times.

Germ Detective

A fun activity to help children to understand the importance of hand washing

Benefits of this experience for children:

1. Children will visually see how germs can spread; this will help to build their awareness for hand hygiene.
2. Hand washing will be a vital component as children return to school, this experience may help them to understand why and support the transition back to school.

You will need:

Water based paint

Soap

Water



What to do

1. **Release the germs:** Explain that the paint is going to be called 'germs'. Use one colour of paint to cover your child's hands (by using a different colour for each child taking part the children can retrace their steps more clearly).
2. **Distribute the germs:** Now encourage your child to shake hands with others, open a door handle, take a drink from a cup etc. Simple tasks that we do regularly.
3. **Germ Removal:** Now go to the sink and help your child to effectively clean all the paint off their hands using soap. Keep talking to your child, ensuring they are clear on the process of hand washing.
4. **Find the remaining germs:** Now help your child to retrace their steps and see the 'germs' that have been left on the various surfaces and clean them off.
5. **Keep the conversation going:** Have a conversation with your child about the importance of handwashing to make sure we keep surfaces clean and prevent germs from spreading.

Suggested planning tool for early years educators

(to support distance learning)

Week	Activity Idea	How will it be communicated?	How can this support physical skill	How to support language and communication	How to support social and emotional skills	How to encourage thinking and creativity	How to support literacy and numeracy
Week of June 7th	This week I'll suggest families take time to have a picnic indoors or outdoors and give ideas of how to practice the development areas listed.	I will send an email and invite people to send photos of how they got on to share on our Facebook. I will share the learning opportunities and tips.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping to carry the supplies (gross motor) Laying out a blanket (gross motor) Wrapping up food helps fine motor skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask your child what you might need to have a picnic What are their favourite snacks and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take time to practice social skills -sharing the food, practicing 'please and thank you' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There might be some things on the list that you don't have at home – ask child what could we use or do? (creative problem solving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring attention to words on packaging Counting how many of each item you will need Cutting sambos in halves or quarters

EXAMPLE

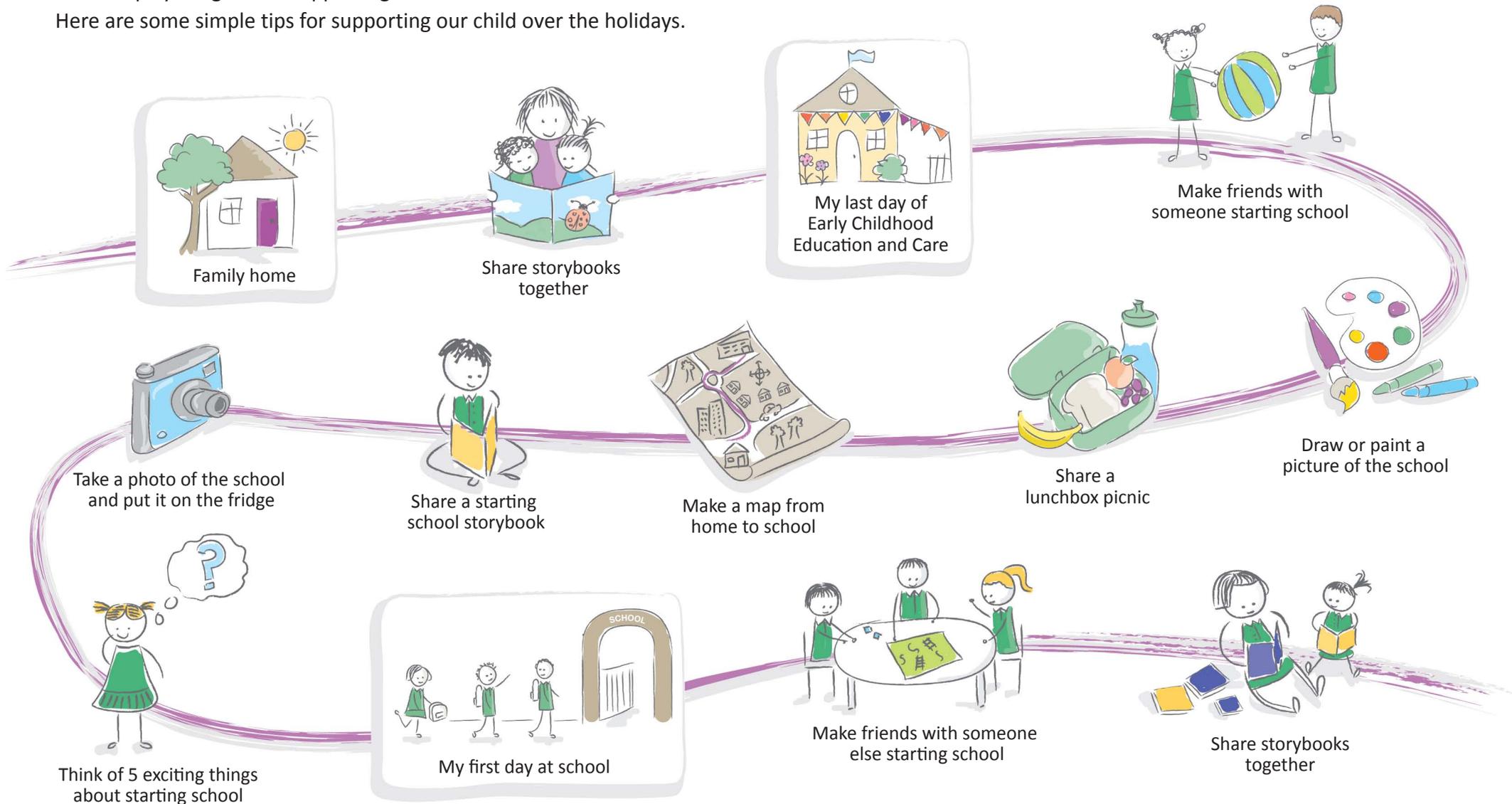


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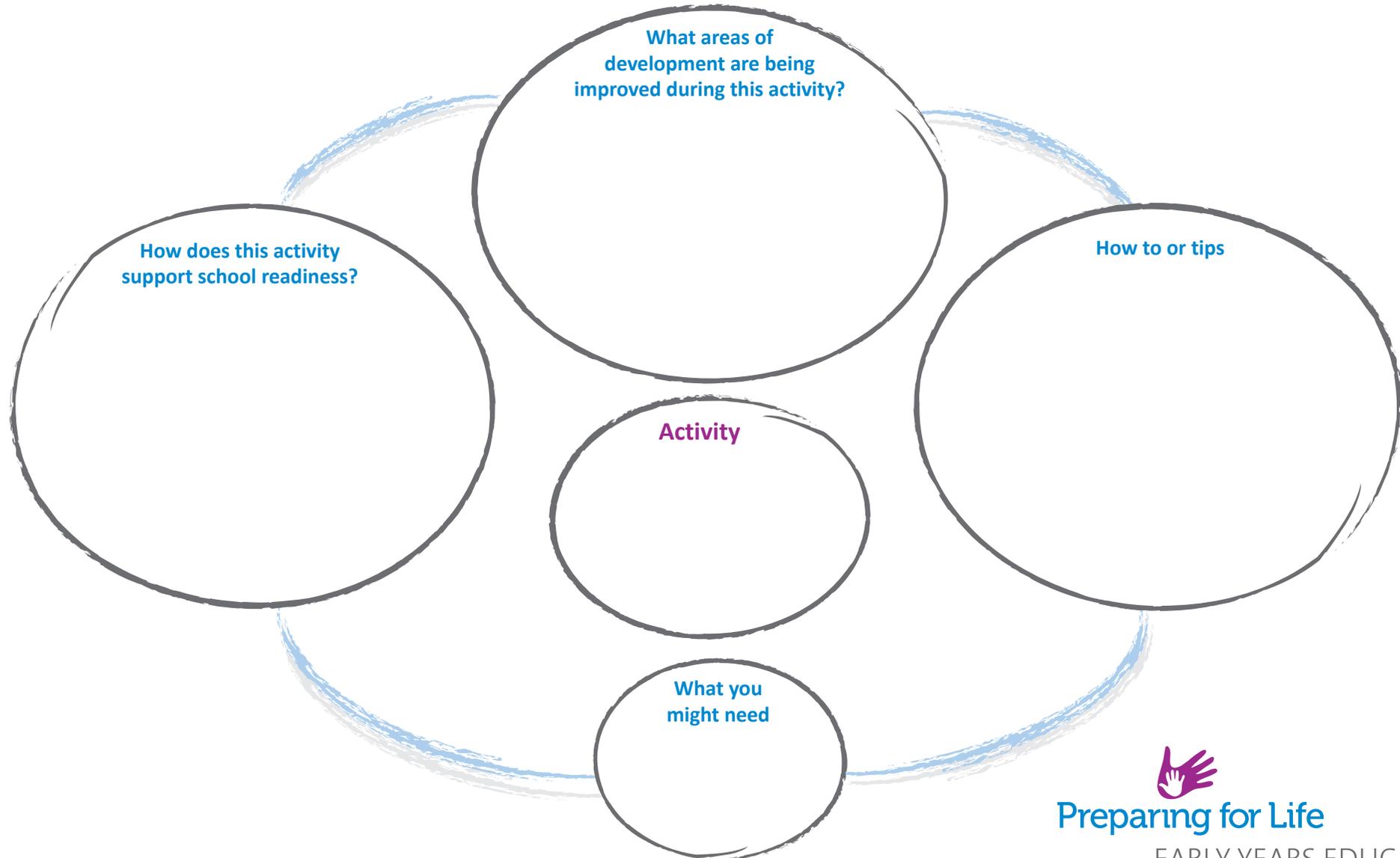
Wondering about school: What can we do together?

Families play a big role in supporting the transition to school.
Here are some simple tips for supporting our child over the holidays.



Example of how to share activities and learning outcomes with families

You could send a parent one of the webs above on a certain area, or you could choose 1 activity and use a web (like below) to give parents a 'how and why' guide to activities



Fun and Educational Online Resources for Children

For Activities for Kids, Parenting Tips and More Supports, visit

www.preparingforlife.ie

<https://www.facebook.com/preparingforlifedublin/> and <https://www.facebook.com/PreparingforLifeEarlyYearsEducation/>

Exercise

1. Joe Wicks 5min workout <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3LPrlh0v-w>
2. Songs to sing along to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lj0B6HQ8jE8>
3. Simple dance routine for children <https://youtu.be/LMxtwzroMTQ>
4. Kids Yoga <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X655B4ISakg>
5. Frozen themed Yoga <https://youtu.be/xlg052EKMtk>

News for Children

1. TRTÉ <https://trte.rte.ie/news2day/>

Art

1. Creative activities for families: <https://www.nationalgallery.ie/what-we-do/education-department/early-years-children-and-families-programme>
2. Fun art ideas <https://artfulparent.com/top-10-art-activities-for-kids/>

Nature

1. Dublin Zoo live cams <https://www.dublinozoo.ie/animals/animal-webcams/>
2. Sir David Attenborough's fascinating documentaries can be found on Netflix and online.
3. National Geographic For Children <https://www.natgeokids.com/ie/>

Books and Nursery Rhymes

1. Audible has a 30 day free trial for audio books for children https://www.audible.co.uk/cat/Children/Ages-0-4-Audiobooks/535876031?ref=a_cat_Child_c1_subCat_0&pf_rd_p=c57d8418-2990-4e6e-92b3-7f42ebbd0566&pf_rd_r=ESE7FP5XFTBDB2G6HSTG
2. Nursery rhymes and counting songs <https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/nursery-rhymes-songs-index/zhwdgwx>

Hygiene

1. Safe food hand washing video <https://youtu.be/Lc4B9BKds6Q>
2. HSE Hygiene Posters <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/influenza/seasonalinfluenza/infectioncontroladvice/respiratoryhygieneposters/>



Preparing for Life

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PreparingForLifeDublin

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An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Oige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs



Northside
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Where Opportunity Meets Community

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