SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AT HOME

A PACK FOR PARENTS: LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

This document has been created by the East Sussex Educational Psychology Service to provide ideas and printable resources for parents at home.

The package includes ideas and resources on **activities to support learning through play**

TOP TIP is HAVE FUN

Don't feel you need to recreate the classroom at home. Take this time to have fun and play with your child – make a den together, get messy with sensory play, make a rocket out of old cereal packets and enjoy!

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Learning through play

Play is essential for development and children learn so much through play. Very many skills required for learning can be learnt through play, such as:

- Fine motor skills
- Careful visual scanning
- Problem solving
- Language
- Social skills

At this time, although it is important to stay in touch with your school and use the resources they provide, remember it is impossible to recreate a classroom in your house and you may need to be imaginative when it comes to planning your day and learning.

Also, it is a perfect time for having fun and finding creative things you can do as a family.

Here are some ideas to help you get started:

- Special time for children helps you to enjoy individual time with each child – page 4
- Some ideas for building imaginative play - page 5-6
- Sensory play activities with minimal resources at home – page 7
- Lots of ideas for games with limited resources – page 8
- Arts and crafts activities – 9-10

Special time for children

- Helps you and your child to enjoy time together

Step one: First clearly identify when the session will begin and end. You may decide you can do between 5-15 minutes.

Step two: Within their special time your child is free to do whatever they like with you as long as it is not dangerous. It might be:

- Sitting together whilst they play their video game
- Cuddling on the sofa watching a programme
- Playing a favourite game
- Reading a story
- Playing with their favourite toys

The adult follows the lead of the child and gives them undivided attention. To show interest you could try the following:

- provide a commentary by describing what you are doing together or what your child is doing
- do not try to lead or change the play by making suggestions
- smile and show you are enjoying whatever the child has chosen
- return eye contact and watch carefully what the child is doing
- copy actions and gestures to show interest

NOTE: Special time needs to be unconditional and cannot be used as a reward or removed as a consequence. To make it fair this special time should be carried out with each of your children. Sometimes, if there is more than one child in a household it can be tricky to find the time to do this without interruptions. In order to make this possible, settle other children down doing something they can enjoy by themselves or if there is another adult in the household, they could take care of the other children during this time. Make it clear to other children when they will get their turn.

Encouraging imaginary play

This develops essential literacy skills such as:

- Developing imagination
- Sequencing events (i.e. first this happened and then this etc.)
- Narrating and re-telling a story

Role play - Try imagining a familiar scenario and acting it out. Decide who will play each role and try out the following:

- Going to the shops (you could even use some real/play money and price up some items)
- Having lunch in a café (with a waiter/waitress taking down orders)
- A lesson in a classroom (teacher and pupil)
- Tea party/ playing at hosting a diner party (host and guest)

Re-enact a familiar story

If you have not got any books readily available, you can always watch a short story on YouTube. For example:

The hungry caterpillar: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=75NQK-Sm1YY**

Goldilocks and the three bears: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0oUP2PFeOi8**

We are going on a bear hunt: **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Waoa3iG3bZ4**

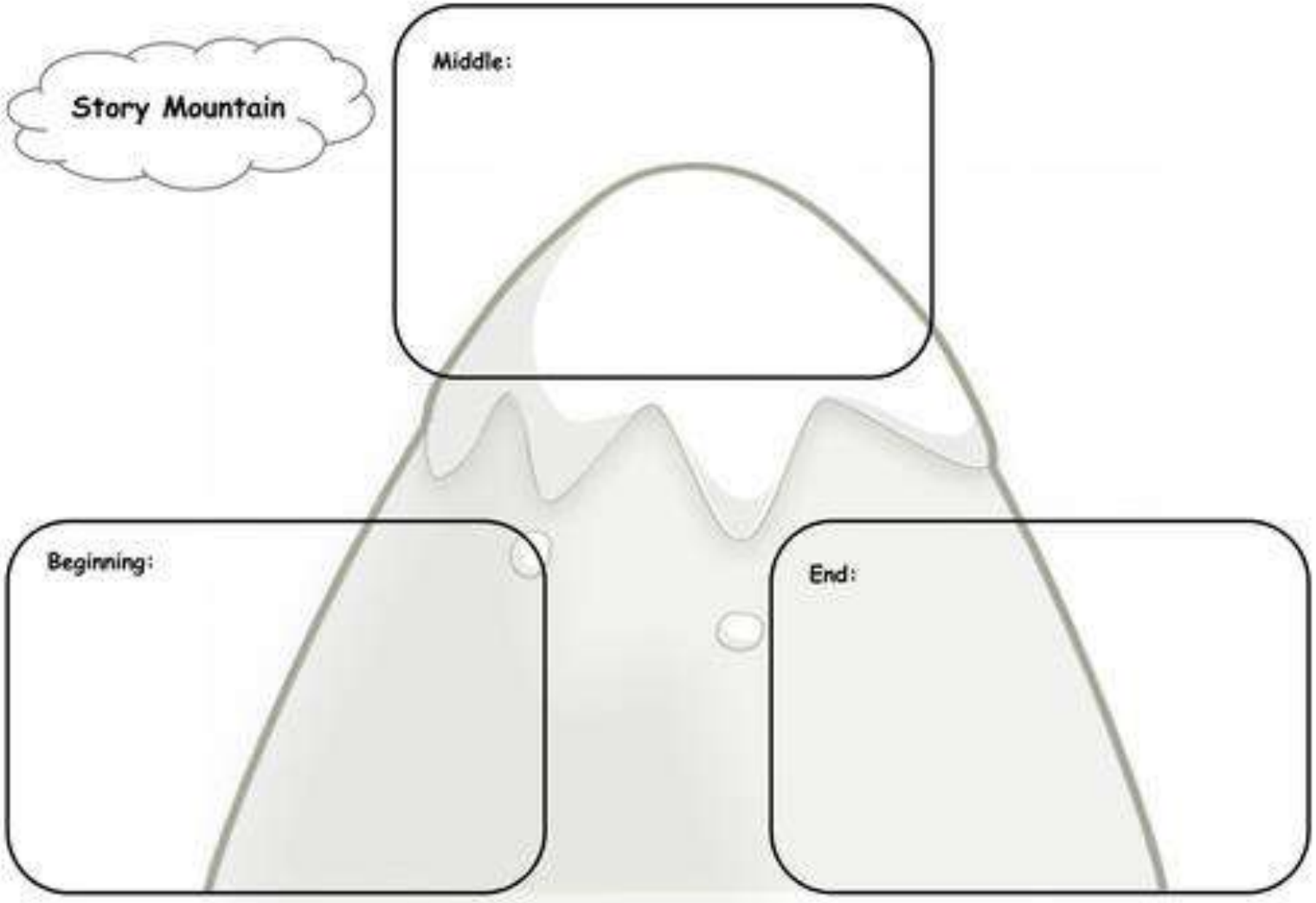
Step 1: Choose a story together you would be happy to re-enact

Step 2: Read/watch the story several times together

Step 3: Decide who will play each character (using yourselves or toys)

Step 4: You may decide you want to simplify the story and you could do this using the story mountain to plan the beginning, middle and end of the story (see page 33).

Step 5: Rehearse the story and once ready you could even film it on your phone or perform it to another family member!


Story Mountain
Middle:
Beginning:
End:

Sensory play

Sensory play helps build many learning skills and supports the development of language, movement (fine and gross motor skills) and problem solving. It encourages exploration and independent learning.

There are several things at home that could be used for sensory play including:

- Emptying a whole packet of rice/pasta/lentils/beans in a big bowl
- Water play- filling up a container or sink with water
- Shaving foam on flat surface
- Hand/foot or finger painting
- Cornflour in water
- Exploring different smells or tastes when blind folded
- Cooked cold pasta/spaghetti

During this activity please be aware of mouthing non-edible objects. If you feel this might be unavoidable then it might be best to use edible sensory material only.

Activities you could try within sensory play:

- Drawing images and guessing what the other is drawing
- Writing/spelling your name or other words
- Pouring/ burying/ finding hidden items
- Following your child's lead
- Getting messy and exploring different textures

All of the above is likely to cause mess because that is the point of the activity! So be prepared for mess! Wear old clothes, choose a place that can be easily cleaned or put something down to protect and cover things that cannot be cleaned to help you to feel more relaxed about this and ENJOY!

Games

These games encourage problem solving, careful visual scanning, eliminating unnecessary information, counting, basic addition and fine motor skills, all of which are essential skills in learning.

Educational games you may already have (or can access through Apps):

- Jigsaw puzzles (or perhaps cutting up a picture from a magazine and then reassembling)
- Shape sorters
- Guess who
- Snakes and ladders
- Bingo
- Uno
- Snap

Games that you can play without needing resources

- **Eye spy:** A turn taking game where one person thinks of an item they can see and says 'Eye spy with my little eye, something beginning with [the first sound of the item they are thinking about]' the others playing the game then try to guess the item the person might have seen using the first sound.

- **Hunt game:** The leader of the hunt gives instructions to find things in the house or garden using hints: For example, 'Find something beginning with 'r'', 'Find something blue', 'Find something that has four legs', 'Find something that you can use to eat with' etc

- **Memory game:** Put household items on a tray, encourage everyone to look carefully at the items and remember as many as they can. After a few minutes of looking carefully, cover up the tray and see how many of them you can remember. Repeat this several times and see if you can remember more items each time

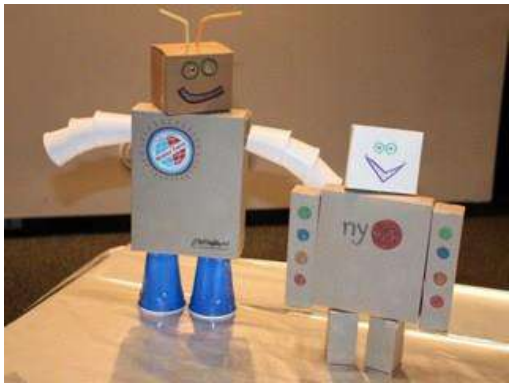
- **Sorting game:** You could use several things for this; food from the kitchen (looking at different food groups like, vegetables, fruit, dairy etc) or cutlery from the cutlery draw (looking at knives, forks etc). Ask your child the following questions; *'What groups have you made?', 'why is [item] in this group?', 'what is the same about all these items?', 'what is different about these two?'*

- **Matching Game:** Get out some socks (clean preferably!) and unpair them (alternatively, you could do this with the clean washing when you are putting it away!). Ask your child to match them to the pair. This helps children to compare items and think about 'same' and 'different'. Ask question like; '*why are these two together?', 'what makes them the same?*', *'why aren't these two in a pair?*'

Art and craft projects

Make something out of cereal boxes or toilet rolls:

You might need cardboard, glue, scissors, cello tape



Making masks

You might need:

- Cardboard
- Colouring pencils
- Scissors
- String

Making finger puppets

- Lollipop sticks
- Paper
- Colouring pens
- Glue

Making collages out of old magazines

- Paper
- Magazines
- Glue
- Scissors

Feedback

We hope this pack has been helpful. We would really value your feedback. Please take a minute to fill in the questions below and send us some feedback so we can continue to support you in ways you feel would be helpful.

Q1. How helpful have you found the parent pack?

Not helpful at all	Not very helpful	A bit helpful	Quite helpful	Very helpful

Q2. What did you find most helpful in the pack?

_____
_____
_____

Q3. Did you feel the resources were accessible and applicable? Y/N

Q4. What do you feel could improve the pack?

_____
_____
_____

Q5. What would you like more of?

_____
_____
_____

Q6. Any other comments?

_____
_____
_____

Q7. What ages are your children? _____

Q8. Do your children have any specific needs? If so, what are they?

_____
_____
_____

Please return the forms via email to EPS@eastsussex.gov.uk or post them to ESCC Educational Psychology Service, Floor 3 St Mark's House, 14 Upperton Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN21 1EP

Thank you and please remember to be kind to yourself

Keep in touch

It's important to keep in touch with friends and family during these challenging times. Many video call platforms have risen to the surface to provide ways in which we can connect with each other.

It's important to **keep in touch with your child's school** to access resources or raise any concerns. Whilst the current circumstances are difficult for schools and parents alike so responses may not be instant, keeping the connection and communication between home and school is pivotal in developing the best support for you and your child.

Here are some helpful organisations:

- **Shout (in partnership with Place2Be)** is free and available 24/7. It is a text crisis service that supports people when they feel they need immediate support. Text CONNECT to 85258, a crisis volunteer will then listen and help you move from crisis to calm. Once you feel calm and safe, and ideally with a plan moving forward, the conversation will end. More information can be found at https://www.giveusashout.org/about-shout/
- **The Young Minds Parents Helpline**, which you can call for free on 0808 802 5544 (9.30am-4pm, Monday-Friday, UK). More information can be found at https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/looking-after-yourself/coronavirus-and-mental-health/
- **Childline** for children and young people in the UK. This can be accessed by calling 0800 1111, online chat or an email (account set up needed). This service is free and available 24/7. More information can be found at https://www.childline.org.uk/.

Please also see the local offer for support and resources available.
https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/childrenandfamilies/specialneeds/staying-at-home-tips-and-activities/

For extra ideas and resources, you may also be interested in
https://www.autism.org.uk/services/helplines/coronavirus/resources/helpful-resources.aspx.

Some things work well for one person and not so well for another, therefore it might take some trial and error to find out what works for you and your family.

Remember to be kind to yourself.