# Library Programming for Preschool Children

## A Toolkit for Public Libraries

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

STATE LIBRARY WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Better Beginnings™

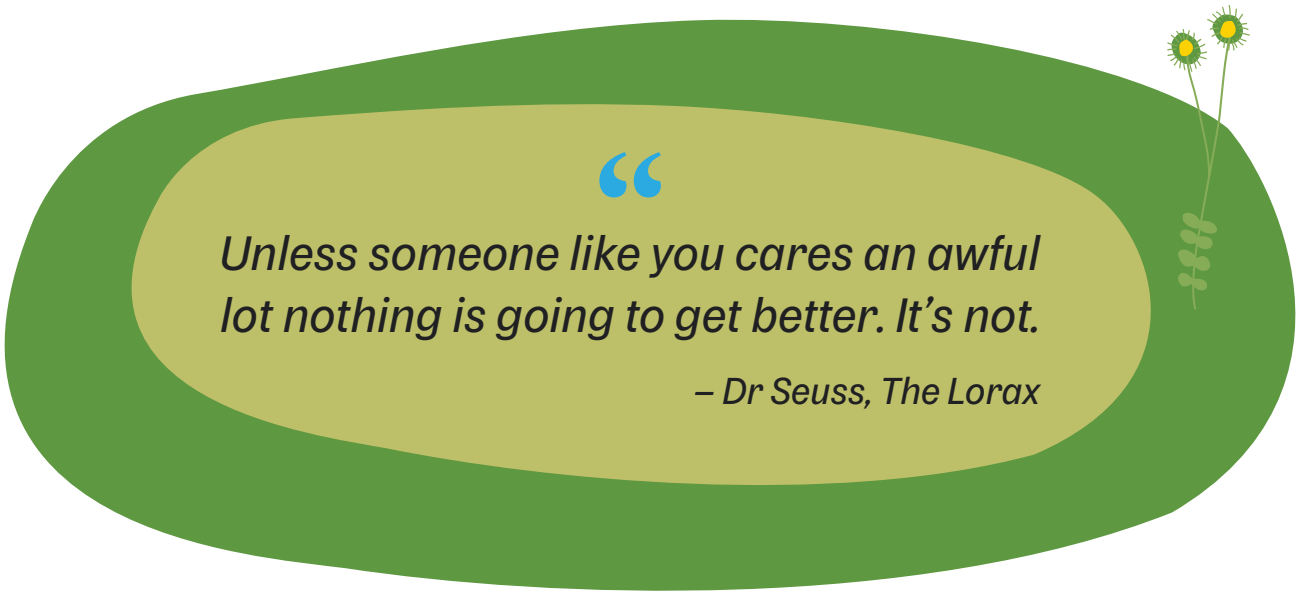
public libraries WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Libraries have long been providers of informal learning opportunities for the communities they serve. Rhyme Times, Story Times, and other early literacy programs and services for pre-school aged children are core components of many public libraries' programming.

The State Library of Western Australia's Strategic Plan 2023–2027 seeks to treasure stories, inspire possibilities, and strengthen communities by championing the essential role of local public libraries. The WA Public Libraries Strategy 2022–2026 seeks to deliver outcomes for Western Australia's communities through three pillars, which include strengthening communities, and public libraries being valued as an essential community asset.

This toolkit provides a framework for public libraries to guide early literacy programming for children aged 0–5, tips and strategies to get started with delivering a new program, and a directory of programs to assist public libraries implementing similar programs within their library service.

One of the intended outcomes of this toolkit is to help library staff highlight the explicit early literacy benefits for families attending your library programming, as well as creating programs that are strongly linked to your library's mission and vision for the community it serves.



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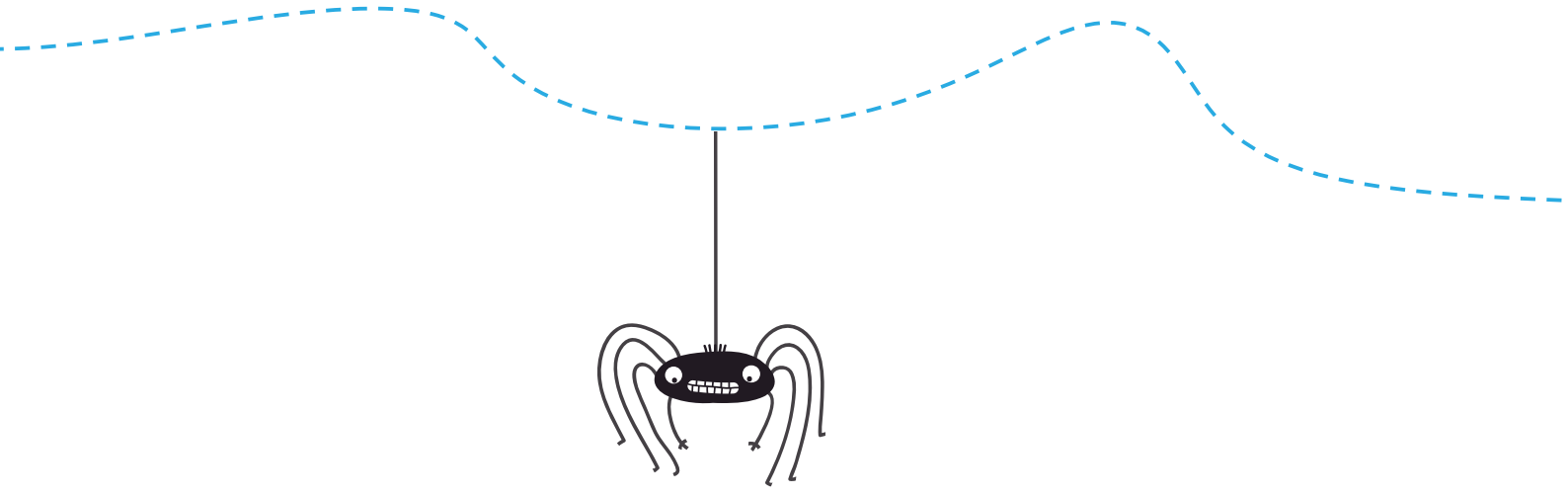
# Programming Considerations

The following table is intended to support library thinking in the development and delivery of library-based literacy programming for pre-school children. It is not envisioned that every program will address all elements, rather it provides some key considerations that will help ensure that your programming meets both your library's and your community's needs.

| Program Considerations | Questions to Ask | Strategies for Addressing | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Library Outcomes | Is there a clear link between your program and the core business/key strategic directions of your library? | Ensure that you can articulate how your program supports the strategic planning of your library service. | Our Learning English Through Story Time program supports our library's key direction of creating a socially connected community by connecting children and families whose first language isn't English. |
| Literacy Development Outcomes | What literacy outcomes have you built into your program?<br>Are the literacy outcomes explicitly stated?<br>Have you provided links to library collections for those attending? | Make explicit the literacy elements and outcomes of the program.<br>Look for opportunities to introduce participants to elements of your collection that you think will be of interest. | (This program) develops children's (literacy skill) so that they can (outcome).<br>To create links to our collection and build interest in our junior graphic novel collection, we used this collection as inspiration for our Create Your Own Super Hero drawing workshop. |
| Australian Curriculum General Capabilities (these skills have been identified as essential in equipping young Australians to live and work successfully in the twenty-first century). | Does your program support the development of any of the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities?<br>While you are developing a program for pre-school children, considering the capabilities could be valuable for children entering kindy or preparing pre-school children for the school environment. | Consider the links between your program and the General Capabilities<br>– Literacy<br>– Numeracy<br>– Information and Communication Technology Capability<br>– Critical and Creative Thinking<br>– Personal and Social Capability<br>– Ethical Understanding<br>– Intercultural Understanding | General Capability: Critical and Creative Thinking.<br>Our Mini Builders program challenges participants to work together to solve a problem each week. This builds their critical and creative thinking skills, as well as preparing them well for group work when they start school. |

| Program Considerations | Questions to Ask | Strategies for Addressing | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Australia's Early Years Learning Framework**.<br>The EYLF aims to extend and enrich children's learning from birth to five years and through the transition to school. | Does your program reflect the Early Years Learning Framework?<br>Can you articulate how your program provides opportunities for early childhood development? | Consider how your program supports the following EYLF's Learning Outcomes:<br>— Children have a strong sense of identity<br>— Children are connected with and contribute to their world<br>— Children have a strong sense of wellbeing<br>— Children are confident and involved learners<br>— Children are effective communicators | Our outdoor story time sessions help children feel connected with their local environment and encourage them to contribute to their environment by collecting their rubbish when they leave our parks |
| Accessibility | Is your program accessible for people with additional needs?<br>Does your program meet the requirements of your Local Government, or in-house, Disability and Inclusion (DAIP) Plan? | Ensure that your program meets DAIP requirements.<br>Alternatively, you might decide to modify and run a similar but separate program to support participation by a specific group in your community. | Our Sensory Storytime program aims to support participation in library programming by families with children who are on the Autism Spectrum who may not be able to successfully join in with our regular Storytime program. |
| **Risk Management** | What are the hazards or risks involved in the event or program, and how will you mitigate risk to library staff and attendees? | Follow your organisation's OHS guidelines or create a risk assessment matrix that addresses risks including (but not limited to);<br>— trips or falls,<br>— manual handling,<br>— small parts or choking hazards,<br>— spread of infectious disease and<br>— tipping risks. | Following our baby sensory program, resources are inspected for loose or damaged parts and cleaned and dried to prevent germs spreading |
| **Cultural Inclusivity** | Is your program sensitive to the needs of the various cultural groups in your community, and does it celebrate cultural differences? | Use data from sources such as OMI and the ABS to gain an understanding of the cultural diversity of your community. | If the people attending your programs speak an additional language, introduce some words from their language in your programs; e.g. Count to 5 together or greet and farewell the whole group in that language and in English. |

| Program Considerations | Questions to Ask | Strategies for Addressing | Examples |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender Inclusivity | Does your program use gender neutral language to encourage participation by all? | Review program marketing and materials to ensure that this information does not suggest that the program is targeting one specific gender group. | Parents with small children are invited to join our drop-in playgroup session on Thursdays. |
| Community | Are any similar programs happening in your community?<br>Who are your target audience for this program and what other services might they be engaging in? | Talk to stakeholders in your community.<br>Research your community. | The toy library operates every other month from a community location. The library can provide a pop-up space on alternate months so both groups are able to reach a wider audience. |
| Limitations | What space, budget and resource constraints do you have? | Consider the program within the delivery of the library service. | The program will allow for a maximum of 20 children and be delivered in the children's area near the children's collection. Resources will be purchased from the children's program budget and staff time will come from within the staffing budget. |



# Getting Started

This section provides information on gathering evidence to support your program, identifying and generating support for program delivery, and other considerations when starting a new program.

The next section is a directory of different types of early literacy programs, with examples of where they are run successfully.

The final section provides templates for creating a program proposal, as well as templates for planning weekly or stand-alone sessions, with examples.

You may already know what type of pre-school early literacy program you want to run at your library. Rhyme Time and Story Time are popular core literacy programs that are a great starting point. If you already run these at your library, you might be looking at something that would meet the needs of a different pre-school audience.

Further detail and examples of the types of pre-school early literacy programs are outlined in the directory. The general categories are listed below. The program you have in mind might not fit into any of these categories, however the planning steps outlined in this document will be helpful for all types of programs.

- Music and Movement *eg Toddler Time*
- Play Based sessions *eg Time for Play*
- Inclusive Sessions *eg Sensory Story Time*
- Alternative Story Time sessions *eg Outdoor Story Time, Puppet Story Time, Story Trails*
- Language or CALD sessions *eg Learning English Through Story Time*
- STEAM or Craft-based sessions *eg Mini Builders or Junior STEAM Lab*

The first stages of implementing a pre-school early literacy program should run concurrently. They involve:

- Determining community need
- Identifying stakeholders
- Gathering internal library support

Once these steps have been completed you can move into planning the program using the planning templates and drawing inspiration from the examples in the directory of early literacy programs.

## Determine community need

You probably already have an understanding of the community you serve. A Community Mapping exercise is helpful if you are required to put together a business case or program proposal to get your early literacy program approved.

Use ABS Community Profiles to help provide an overview of the community: **abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/search-by-area**

Use AEDC **aedc.gov.au/data** NAPLAN **myschool.edu.au** and/or other relevant data to support targeting specific areas or skills in your community. For example, you might show the AEDC data to demonstrate that a certain percentage of children in your community are vulnerable or at risk in the domains of language and communication to justify the implementation of an early literacy program in your library.

Take note of what is already happening in your community – you don't want to double up on services. If there is already a well-established play group there may not be need for a sensory play session at the library. Instead, you could offer to visit for a monthly Story Time session or look instead at a STEAM-based, language, or makerspace program.

Look beyond your immediate community to other library services running similar projects to find out what has and hasn't worked for them and how they have delivered similar projects. You can do this via Public Libraries Online (PLO) **plo.slwa.wa.gov.au**

The directory of programs will provide some starting points of who may be a helpful contact.

## Explore and identify stakeholders

Stakeholders could be:

- **People who will attend your program**
  Families attending the local kindy, playgroup, or day care. New families to your community.
- **People who will promote your program**
  Shopping centres, schools, day care centres, community event days (Farmer's market, local fairs), local sporting groups or community organisations, community Facebook pages, Local Government/Shire
- **People who could collaborate or co-fund your program**.
  Community groups (toy libraries, community gardens), small businesses, other areas within local government (Can you collaborate with waste or environmental services to host a recycling event/ sustainable story time), nearby libraries, school groups, local clubs such as Scouts, Guides, Lifesavers, CWA.

Identifying the right people in the community can create opportunities to collaborate or secure alternate avenues of funding. As contacts build, ask them about local events and when events are being promoted, so you can attempt to contact organisers. Even if there is no capacity to attend that event, it is an opportunity to develop connections for future events.

- School contact information can be found at:
  **det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do**
  **ais.wa.edu.au**
  **cewa.edu.au**
- Find a local childcare centre: **startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care**
- Find a local playgroup: **playgroupwa.com.au**
- If you have a Community Development Officer in your organisation, they may be able to help with networks or groups in the area.

Find contact information for local shopping centres, farmer's markets, and businesses on their websites or visit the location in person.

## Grant Funding and other support

There are a variety of grants and sources of funding that can support the delivery of programs and events. Here are some examples:

- Australian Government provides grants for STEM programs and National Science Week engagement activities: **industry.gov.au/science-technology-and-innovation/science-engagement**
- Children's Book Council of Australia Book Week Grants Funding: **wa.cbca.org.au/eoi-childrens-book-weekreg**
- Children's Week Community Grants to fund an event during Children's Week in late October: **childrensweekwa.org.au/grants**
- Government of Western Australia Grants: **dlgsc.wa.gov.au/funding**

## Other sources of support

- Better Beginnings offers free training to public library staff on delivering and improving various early literacy programs. To access this training, register or login as a practitioner by clicking the BB for Practitioners button on the Better Beginning's website **better-beginnings.com.au** then, under resources, select Training and view the Training Schedule to book in to a session.
- Travel grants are available for regional and remote staff to attend. Visit PLO or email the **State Library of Western Australia** to get more information about applying for a travel grant. If travel is not a possibility, contact Better Beginnings for advice on shaping and delivering an early literacy program.
  Travel Grants: **slwa.grants@slwa.wa.gov.au**
  Better Beginnings Training enquiries: **bbtraining@slwa.wa.gov.au**

- Better Beginnings at the State Library of Western Australia have resources available for loan by public libraries to support the delivery of programs and events. *You need to be logged in as a practitioner to access these resources*. **better-beginnings.com.au/resources**
- Australian Museum has learning resource and activities available online which can be used as inspiration for pre-school STEM activities: **australian.museum/learn/teachers/learning**
- STAR Net is a resource developed to support libraries to deliver STEM programs. It provides activity guides for simple STEM activities: **starnetlibraries.org/resources/steam-ahead-at-home**
- Find Australian author and illustrator websites or contacts via:
  Literature Centre website **thelitcentre.org.au/artists-we-work-with**
  Fremantle Press **fremantlepress.com.au**
  Paper Bird Speakers Agency: **paperbird.com.au/speakers-agency**
  Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators: **scbwi.org/regions/australiawest**

Once you have an idea of the type of early literacy program you want to offer, and of the audience and stakeholders, you need to turn inward to your library service.

Consider the limitations and strengths of your library service and how your ideas can be adapted to suit your space, budget, staffing and time. You don't need to have a big program for it to be successful. Scaling back a version of a larger program, in terms of the resources provided, or in how often it is offered, is likely to be more sustainable than trying replicate a program from a different environment with difference resources. The program you create does not need to be compared to any other library's offering – if it is a fit for your community and your library's capacity, it can be very successful.

Consult the library and management team on their thoughts and support for the project. Engaging colleagues is more likely to result in a program that they feel confident promoting and supporting. Consider what part of the workload will need to be shifted to run this program and if or how it will impact your other work. The evidence you've gathered from your community mapping will help you justify why this program is important for your community.

Consult with appropriate people within your organisation to discuss plans for access and inclusion (Indigenous Project Officer, Access and Inclusion Project Officer), and local networking groups, service providers, and community members such as Elders etc.

Once your program has been approved, you can start planning using the templates at the end of this document. The rest of this section covers tips on promoting the program, managing participants within the program, providing passive early literacy programming, and gathering meaningful evaluations.

# Promoting your Program

- Send promotional material directly to stakeholders that can be shared via email, newsletters and social media.
- Add a leaflet inviting families to your library or about your children's programs to the Better Beginnings Baby and Toddler packs when you hand them out to families and child health nurses.
- Utilise outreach opportunities – day cares, playgroups, child health nurse clinics, community events, shopping centres etc. Consider running small samples of programs and talking to families about what is on offer in the library. Be flexible and adapt depending on the outreach location. For example, connect with a local playgroup by offering a Story Time visit, or see if you can arrange a pop-up space at a shopping centre or market to promote your children's programming.
- Upselling – Where the opportunity arises tell people about the program. For example, at existing programs and events, when they are browsing items on a related topic, or if they are asking about other types of programs etc.

# Tips for managing groups of children and families.

Early childhood programs for pre-school aged children rely heavily on parental participation and involvement. Outline your expectations early for adults and use the opportunity to share relevant early literacy messaging and other activities they can do at home to continue the experience outside the library. As you run the activity or program, speak to the adults about the literacy benefits of the activity. For example; "We're using scissors in our craft today because scissor skills strengthen you child's hand muscles. This will make it easier when they are learning to write at school."

Make it clear to parents and grown-ups what level of participation you expect from them, i.e. turning off their phones, singing the songs, guiding their child in the craft (but not doing it for them). If you are running a STEAM or play-based activity you can provide the parents a list of talking points to ask their child as they complete the activity.

The parent is responsible for their child's behaviour while attending a library program. However, there are strategies the facilitator can use to help manage and direct a group of children.

- Don't give the children the resources until after you have given them instructions – this reduces the opportunity to fiddle or start using the resources prior to instruction. Ensure other distracting resources are put away or out of eyesight where possible.
- After providing instruction allow children and grown-ups to ask questions – this reduces the likelihood of them all asking the same questions.
- Where applicable, if you can encourage information from the children, they will be more likely to engage. For example, what do you think we will do first? What do you think we will do next? Why? Etc.

> *The greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places.*
>
> *– Roald Dahl, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*

# Passive Programming

If a facilitated, staff-led program is not possible in your library, there are other ways to promote and foster early literacy in your community. Passive programming can provide opportunities for library users to develop literacy skills and have a meaningful experience in your library space when there are limitations on staff time and availability. Here are some ideas for delivering passive programming for pre-school aged children:

- Interactive displays in the library. Provide something to do such as adding to a collective artwork, or your library could encourage children and families to share their reviews, stars or other endorsements on books in your collection or a shared display; 'Books we love.'
- Book Displays. For example, a display promoting the WA Young Readers Book Awards and encouraging children to participate by voting.
- Scavenger hunts. Provide children with clues or a checklist of things that can be found around the library, this could be actual items in the library or pictures that have been placed around the library.
- Activities with instructions available. Provide easy craft activities with simple steps that can be completed in the library or as a take-home.

- Have a library 'mascot' like a large soft toy. Encourage children to share their favourite story with the mascot and tell them about books they enjoyed. This can help make the experience of coming to the library more exciting if the children have someone to 'visit' and share their news with.
- Having a small collection of puzzles, blocks, or toys available to encourage play in the library. You can leave messaging for adults about why these resources have been made available. "Puzzles are good for hand eye co-ordination and the fine motor skills that will help your children write when they start school."

# Celebrations and special dates

Every day, week, or month of the year is dedicated to celebrating or recognising something. These can be opportunities to support program and events planning. You may also want to consider local events or dates or significance.

**timeanddate.com/holidays/fun** has a list of unusual celebrations you could use to guide your program's weekly themes or run a one-off event. For example, July 10th is Teddy Bears Picnic Day; you could host an indoor or outdoor teddy bears picnic Story Time to celebrate.

Here are some celebrations you may want to consider when planning for pre-school aged children:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 14 February | Library Lovers' Day | **alia.org.au/libraryloversday** |
| March | Harmony Week | **harmony.gov.au** |
| May | Library and Information Week including National Simultaneous Story Time | **alia.org.au/liw**<br>**alia.org.au/nss** |
| July | NAIDOC Week | **naidoc.org.au** |
| August | Book Week | **wa.cbca.org.au** |
| August | National Science Week | **scienceweek.net.au** |
| August/ September | National Literacy and Numeracy Week | |
| September | Indigenous Literacy Day | **indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au** |
| October | Children's Week WA | **childrensweekwa.org.au** |
| November | International Games Week | |
| Summer Holidays | Summer Reading | **summerreadingquest.net** |

# Tips for evaluation

Evaluations for events can provide libraries with important information. They can help shape your events into something valuable for the community, and help justify them to management, funding bodies, or stakeholders.

When it comes to event evaluations for pre-school children there are two things to consider. Who do you want the feedback from, and why?

Adult feedback is important because they are the ones deciding how they spend their time with their child, and they are bringing their children to your events.

Consider why you need the feedback – are you checking in with a program's progress or do you need to report on the program to management or other stakeholders? Sometimes it is better to have an informal chat with families at the end of the session to get an idea of how the program is running and if changes need to be made. When more formal feedback is required, consider the nature of the program. If the same families attend each week, it might be best to offer one opportunity for feedback at the end of the term, if the session is more transient, you might offer more opportunities for feedback throughout the term to capture a range of participants.

Appropriate questions could be:

- Would you attend this event again? Why/Why Not?
- Did you learn anything new about (Link this question to your objectives of the program)

For older pre-school children participating in your events, stick to one visual question – a smiley face or sad face, a thumbs up or down – that way small children or children who are non-verbal can articulate their enjoyment of the event.

# Directory of Early Literacy Programs

Early Literacy programs provide your community a chance to visit the library regularly to participate in fun and free programs for their children. It is also a natural space for the library to offer parents and caregiver's information about why these programs are important by sharing appropriate early literacy messaging tailored to the programs aims and the age of children. Use these programs as a space to remind families of the importance of reading, talking, singing, writing, and playing every day with their children. These programs are also a chance to acknowledge parents as their child's first and most important teacher, and to let them know that by bringing their children to the library and actively participating in library programs they are giving their child the skills they need to be ready to read.

In each section there is a selected contact list of libraries offering that type of session. These are current as of January 2025. Other libraries not listed may also offer these services, and it worth reaching out to any you have a relationship with to find out more about how they deliver their programs.

## Key Early Literacy Programming – Story Time and Rhyme Time

Story Time and Rhyme time are core early literacy programs that can be offered at your library. As well as providing an enjoyable session for families with young children, these sessions are a chance to share key early literacy messages with your community and to impress upon them the benefits and importance of reading, talking, singing, writing, and playing with their children every day.

Both sessions typically run for 20–30 minutes and share rhymes, stories, songs, and early literacy messaging. Story Time will generally share two to three stories based on a theme (Bugs, Cars, The Weather, etc) and is sometimes followed by a craft or play session. Rhyme time focuses on rhymes and songs and may share a short book appropriate for babies. Ideally, sessions run weekly – but consider your capacity. A session run once a month may be more realistic for your workload. Depending on the size of your community, a monthly session may be better attended than weekly sessions.

Baby Rhyme Time is best suited for babies aged 0–18 months and Story Time for 2–5 years, however the number of children and their ages in your community might mean you would be better off combining the sessions and adapting it to the age of attendees or creating an alternate format such as Family Time or Toddler Time.

Better Beginnings provides training and resources to support delivery of Rhyme Time and Story Time at your library. There are also short videos on the Better Beginnings website to provide a starting point for planning sessions.

If you don't have capacity to plan sessions, book a Story Time Suitcase. Better Beginnings offer Story Time Suitcases which have everything you need to run sessions – books, resources and session plans. Borrow them as a starting point and for inspiration to develop your own programs.

# Music and Movement

## Overview

These sessions cater to children from around 18 months – 3 years old. They are highly interactive, using whole body rhymes and songs (such as Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes) to encourage movement and physical activity, and are often followed by an opportunity to play.

## Types of programs:

- Toddler Time
- Time For Movement

## Things to consider or try

Hand out play-scarves to wave about or musical instruments to use during these sessions. You may have time at the start of the session to create an instrument (such as a simple rice shaker) that families can use and take home or keep in the library to use next time.

Ideally, this session will also include a story to encourage a mat time session where sitting and listening is the focus. Use that time to share your early literacy messaging with parents. These sessions focus on the early literacy activities Sing and Play. Many libraries use themes to guide their weekly sessions and bring out a specific resource for children to play with at the end of the session. (i.e. farm animals after a farm session, toy cars or a train set after a transport session) You can plan 10 themes and repeat them term to term to make planning easier.

Depending on your demographic, this type of session might fold in between your existing Rhyme Time or Story Time sessions, or one of those programs might be better suited to be adapted to a Music and Movement program.

## Early Literacy Messaging

- Gross Motor Skills
- Singing
- Playing
- Phonological Awareness

## Examples in Other Libraries

- Toddler Tales – Cockburn Libraries  Contact:  9411 3800
  cockburnlibraries.com.au/programs/toddler-tales
- Time for Movement – City of South Perth  Contact:  9474 0800
  southperth.wa.gov.au/community/libraries/library-services/services/time-for-movement
- Music and Movement – Newman Library, East Pilbara  Contact: 9177 9600
  eastpilbara.wa.gov.au/shire-services/shire-facilities/libraries/newman-library.aspx

# Play

## Overview

Play is an important part of a child's development which incorporates gross motor development (large muscles – crawling, jumping), fine motor development (small muscles – grasping, threading), social/emotional development (interacting with others, taking turns), language development (listening and talking) and cognitive development (thinking and problem solving).

Libraries can provide opportunities to play in structured or unstructured sessions, depending on capacity. Offering the library space during certain days to playgroups, toy libraries, or inviting local childcare centres to visit could be an option if you don't have capacity to run sessions yourself.

## Types of programs

Provide books and toys to a theme. You can read a story, share some rhymes and then guide a play session or let families explore the provided materials.

Some themes and props you could provide are:

- Construction books + blocks or building materials + toddler hard hats, dress ups, tools.
- Gardening books + play fruit and vegetables + plastic pots and fake flowers + watering can.

Alternatively, you can provide a range of resources – crawl tunnels, small obstacle courses, balls, building blocks, puzzles and have a play session where any story is shared – you don't need to tie each session to a theme.

## Things to consider

You can start small with resources. An option is to build the start of your program around found resources. Ask families who come into the library to bring a box or other material and use what you have to build something together. Apply for grants **lotterywest.wa.gov.au/grants/grant-opportunities/grassroots-community-led** build partnerships with Playgroup WA or toy libraries, or appeal to the community for donations to build your play resources.

## Early Literacy Messaging

- Play
- Gross Motor Skills
- Fine Motor Skill
- Share messages about how play and movement is tied in with early literacy skills and brain development.

## Examples in Other Libraries

– Buster – Fremantle Library Contact: 9432 9999
**fremantle.wa.gov.au/buster**

– It's all about Play – Wanneroo Libraries Contact: 9405 5940
**wanneroo.wa.gov.au/info/20004/community/235/childrens_activities**

– Time for Play – Manning Library Contact: 9474 0822
**southperth.wa.gov.au/community/libraries/library-services/services/time-for-play**

# Alternate Story Time or Story Telling Sessions

## Overview

Variations of Story Time could be more appropriate for your Library. A structured weekly session might be out of scope for your staffing, so planning one-off story telling events or activities, or adapting how you share a story could be better suited to your service.

## Types of programs

- Outdoor Story Time
- Story Trails
- Family Time
- Picture Book book clubs
- Flannel board or Puppet Story Time

## Things to consider or try

If you have a beautiful local outdoor space near your library, consider taking your Story Time outdoors. This is a great opportunity for outreach and could allow you to meet people in your community who haven't visited the library, as it will enable you to promote your library service and invite passersby.

Things to consider: weather, hazards in a public space (rubbish, glass, open bodies of water), access to toilets, access for prams/wheelchair users, hiring or reserving the space, other park users (are there any group fitness classes happening at the same time? Sports club training?) Sprinklers?

Book clubs for families with small children can provide an opportunity for parents to socialise and borrow new books. Make use of the Better Beginnings Book Finder or the book lists 30 books for... to suggest books. Or use resources such as Storybox library to offer the same title to families attending a session.

Story Trails are set up in a public space along a path. At the beginning of the path is an indicator of the starting point and the cover of the picture book that is used, usually accompanied with information about the library, publisher, any sponsors, and how to proceed. After a short distance, walkers will find a page or two of the book to read before proceeding on to the next stop, a pattern that is repeated until the book is complete. Story Trails may just contain book pages, but some include activities, information, or questions posted with the story pages.

You will need permission from the publisher and book's creators to create a Story Trail. Perhaps there is a local author whose work you could feature, or a book that is tied into a special moment or festival for your community.

## Early Literacy Messaging

- Read – anytime, anywhere
- Print Motivation

## Examples in Other Libraries

**Stories in the Park – City Farm. City of Perth Library** Contact: 9461 3500
visitperth.com/events/stories-in-the-park---city-farm

Better Beginnings have a Story Tent, Spin-a-Story Wheels, and Play Panels available for loan to use at an outdoor story telling event or at a library booth at a local community event. Book these resources via the Public Libraries Help Desk.

better-beginnings.com.au/resources/story-tent-and-spin-story-wheels

better-beginnings.com.au/resources/play-panels

# Inclusive or Sensory Story Time

## Overview

Sensory Story Time is designed specifically for children who are neuro-diverse or who have complex sensory needs. Sessions work best as small group sessions. The format can include a story and felt board story, a few songs and rhymes and a structured play session with different activity stations. i.e. kinetic sand, sorting colours with tongs, boat or water play, exploring different textures.

## Types of programs

- ☐ Sensory Story Time

## Things to consider

Ideally you will have a separate space to deliver these sessions to limit distractions and noise from other areas of the library. If this is not possible, schedule these sessions during a quiet time of day.

Provide a visual timetable to help participating children to understand what will happen at each stage. This can be comforting to neuro-diverse children.

Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia) provides a resource for developing Sensory Story Times
aspect.org.au/our-services/therapy-services/early-childhood-supports/building-tots/sensory-storytime

Plumtree provides free online training for public library staff. This is a resource that provides advice on making library spaces and programming more inclusive
plumtree.org.au/old-plumtree-professional/libraries-as-community-connectors

## Early Literacy Messaging

- Reading
- Playing
- Singing
- Fine motor skills

## Examples in Other Libraries

- **Sensory Sing and Play - Scarborough and Dianella** Contact: 9205 7420
  stirling.wa.gov.au/attractions-and-recreation/libraries-and-hubs/library-programs-and-activities
- **Sensory Story Time - Thornlie Library** Contact: 9254 8750
  gosnells.wa.gov.au/Lifestyle/Libraries/Library_locations/Thornlie_Library/Sensory_Storytime_at_Thornlie_Library
- **Sensory Story Time - Whitford Library** Contact: 9400 4751
  joondalup.wa.gov.au/whats-on/events-calendar/sensory-story-time

# First Nations Story Time

## Overview

If there are a number of people in your community who speak a particular Aboriginal language, there may be interest in a program catered to sharing and celebration stories and songs in that language.

## Types of programs

- First Nations Story Time
- Yarning Time
- Collections or Book Club made available in First Nation Languages.

## Things to consider

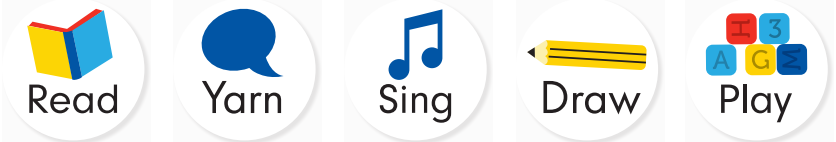
Consider if a First Nations Story Time is appropriate to offer depending on your location and staff. Delivery of this program by a First Nations person would be required for this program after appropriate consultation. Do you have a good connection, or can you build a relationship with a suitable storyteller? Do the books in your collection reflect your community? It can be difficult to source books in language. The Indigenous Literacy Foundation might be able to assist identifying appropriate books and in some cases they offer Community Publishing where a book created for a community that meets their publishing criteria can be published in language.

## Early Literacy Messaging

- Share stories in the language you are most comfortable with.
- Read
- Yarn

## Examples in Other Libraries

- Bookish Play, The Deadly Way (First Nations Storytime) – Broome  Contact: 9191 3456
  **broome.wa.gov.au/Community/Broome-Public-Library/Library-Programs-and-Events**
- Koolangka Waangkiny Noongar Language Story Time – Victoria Park  Contact: 9373 5500
  **victoriaparklibrary.wa.gov.au/events/koolangka-waangkiny-noongar-language-storytime/43**



# Language/CALD programs

## Overview

If you have people in your community who speak a language other than English, you may be able to offer them the opportunity to practise English through a Story Time setting with a program like LETS (Learning English Through Story Time), or to provide them with the space and resources for a dedicated language story group so families can read to their children in their home language.

## Types of programs

- LETS (Learning English Through Story Time)
- Specific Language Story Time or Rhyme Time Sessions
- Collections or Book Club made available in languages other than English

## Things to consider

Is there a specific language group in your community you can create a storytelling program for? If library staff can't speak the language, a volunteer or external presenter could run a session in your library space. If there is no capacity to run a session, your library may be able provide picture books or board books in other languages and offer the library as a meeting space for the language group. Resources could be a special collection for use in the library, or made available for loan.

LOTE4Kids is a digital collection of picture books available in a variety of world languages. It could be promoted at community groups or utilised in a special languages story time. **slwa.wa.gov.au/eresources/lote4kids**

Learning English through Story Time (LETS) is suitable for parents/carers and their children aged 3 – 4 years for whom English is a second language. LETS uses songs, rhymes, stories and facilitated activities to encourage English conversation and increase opportunities to practise speaking English.

## Early Literacy Messaging

- Share stories in the language you are most comfortable with.
- Read
- Talk

## Examples in Other Libraries

Rhymes in Chinese – Success Library  Contact: 9411 3840
**cockburnlibraries.com.au/programs/rhymes-in-chinese**

Better Beginnings Training – Learning English Through Story Time (LETS)
**better-beginnings.com.au/resources/learning-english-through-story-time-lets** (Log in as a practitioner to access the training information.)

# STEAM or Creative Craft Sessions

## Overview

STEAM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Arts/Maths) or craft sessions while very engaging, have the potential to be very resource heavy. Careful planning can help shape a program suited to your library service.

## Types of programs

- Mini Makers – construction activities using found objects provided by participants or the library. Eg. bring in a milk carton and we'll make a boat, bring in a cardboard box and we'll make a car.
- Mini Builders – participants use Duplo or other blocks to create a weekly build challenge.
- Crafternoons – facilitated craft sessions where everyone works on the same, or a shared, project each week.
- STEAM Labs – 1–5 stations exploring Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths
- STEAM Story Time Sessions – sessions based around a Story Time theme or book – supported by a reading and songs, followed by steam activities with 1-5 stations exploring Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths
- Tech explorers – exploring and learning about age-appropriate technology for toddlers.

## Things to consider

Smaller library services could find the set up quite resource intensive. A scaled down option could include offering one station per session and rotating which STEAM element is focused on that day. i.e. Who sank the boat? / Engineering focus / Create a boat that floats. Other STEAM elements related to the theme or story can be discussed, but only one element is explored in a hands-on way per session, with an option to increase this as resources build up to expand the program.

Provide staff facilitated craft stations – or set up as a DIY activity where a template and resources are provided. This would require monitoring as the stations can get messy quickly depending on the components of the craft – or you could encourage families to take the craft home to complete it.

Found resources stations can encourage recycling. This could be an opportunity to tie in or partner with waste management services and education within your community.

Better Beginnings offer training for creating STEAM activities and incorporating STEAM into your Story Time.
**better-beginnings.com.au/resources/incorporating-stem-early-childhood-programs**

They also offer loanable STEAM kits your library can borrow to run sessions.

## Early Literacy Messaging

Don't forgot to tie activities to an early literacy message. Base a session on a book in your collection and explain how the activities offered support an early literacy skill or practice.

- Read
- Play

## Examples in Other Libraries

Under 5 Steam Lab – Mary Davis Library Baldivis  Contact: 9591 0800
**rockingham.wa.gov.au/facilities-and-recreation/libraries/for-the-kids**

STEAMing into Story Time –  Whitford Library  Contact: 9400 4889
**joondalup.wa.gov.au/whats-on/events-calendar/steaming-into-story-time**

Craft Lab – Vincent Library and Local History Centre  Contact: 9273 6090
**library.vincent.wa.gov.au/events/craft-lab/2641?c=12**

# Templates

The following templates can be used as guides or inspiration for planning your programs. Adjust them as needed to fit your library service.

## Program Plan Template

| | |
|---|---|
| **Program Title** | Enter the planned name for the program |
| **Target Audience** | Enter the target audience for the program |
| **Background** | Enter the relevant background information for the project. For example, where the idea came from and reasoning for delivering the program with support from research if applicable |
| **Objectives**<br>Library Outcomes<br>Literacy Outcomes<br>General Capabilities (GC) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) | ☐ Links to Library strategic plans or other sources relevant to library service<br>☐ Reflects the literacy learning outcomes for participants of the program<br>☐ How does your programming link with the EYLF or the GC. How is Early Childhood / Literacy Development supported through this program? |
| **Scope** | Enter summary information about when, where, and how often the program will be delivered as well as what will be delivered |
| **Risk Management** | How will you ensure this program is child-safe and/or COVID safe? |
| **Accessibility Adaptations or Considerations** | Enter any ideas for how to support accessibility |
| **Cultural Considerations** | Enter any ideas for how to demonstrate cultural respect |
| **Required Resources** | Enter all resources required to deliver the program |
| **Budget** | Enter approximate costs required to deliver the program |
| **Stakeholders** | Enter all people involved in the project, including internal and external stakeholders such as potential partners and participants. If known, outline their involvement in the project |
| **Promotion** | Enter the methods used to promote the program |
| **Evaluation** | Enter the methods used to evaluate the program |

## Program Plan Example – Tech Taster (STEAM)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Program Title** | Tech Taster / Mini Tech Explorers |
| **Target Audience** | Children aged 3–5 |
| **Background** | The library's key messaging has been to promote the idea of no screen time for children under 2, however there has been little guidance about how to introduce technology once children become toddlers. The library aims to provide hands on tech exploration sessions which will provide:<br>☐ Information on how to turn technology time into family time.<br>☐ Messaging for parents about identifying age-appropriate technology for their children.<br>☐ Provide a fun, interactive space for families to try new types of technology without the associated expense. |
| **Objectives** | |
| Library Outcomes | ☐ The library provides opportunities for the community to become digitally informed citizens.<br>☐ The library creates opportunities for all to access and utilise resources that may be unavailable to some families due to cost or availability.<br>☐ The library is equipping its community of children growing up in the 21st century with the skills needed to approach technology critically, mindfully, and with curiosity. |
| Literacy Outcomes | ☐ Parents/carers will learn about different types of technology and be able to make more informed choices when introducing technology to their children.<br>☐ Children will develop early coding skills through hands on play. |
| General Capabilities (GC) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) | ☐ Children are confident and involved learners. By exploring the technology, we will encourage the children to plan, ask questions and solve problems.<br>☐ Information and Communication Technology Capability. The sessions will give children the chance to explore technology they may not have access to at home, and will provide them with pre-coding and other digital literacy skills. |
| **Scope** | The program will be delivered over 2 weeks to allow plenty of time to explore the resources used.<br>Following the 2-week taster session, participants will be invited to comment on which activities they found most engaging, with the view to purchase a small number of the popular resources to continue weekly or fortnightly Mini Tech Explorer sessions. |
| **Risk Management** | ☐ Hand sanitising stations will be provided to participants upon entry.<br>☐ Children will be required to be 3 years and older to participate as the kits contain small parts. Parental supervision regarding components of the kits will be required.<br>☐ Stations will be spread out, however social distancing will be difficult to maintain due to the nature of the session. Messaging will be provided urging families not to attend if they are unwell. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Accessibility Adaptations or Considerations** | ☐ Stations will be set up on the floor or table to allow for people who need to sit or stand.<br>☐ Consider how each individual challenge can be adapted to suit abilities.<br>☐ Provide multiple examples of the challenge (images) to encourage a variety of abilities and support English Language Learners. |
| **Cultural Considerations** | The library will do an Acknowledgement of Country prior to the session.<br>For Example:<br>"Here is the land, here is the sky.<br>Here are my friends and here am I.<br>We thank the _____ people for the land on which we play<br>And promise to look after it every single day" |
| **Required Resources** | ☐ Tech Taster Kit from Better Beginnings (Booked via Public Libraries Help Desk)<br>☐ Library Meeting Room Space |
| **Budget** | ☐ Staff time (11.5 hours)<br>– 4 hours to familiarise with kits and go over lesson plans<br>– 2x 2 hour sessions delivering the program<br>– 2x 1 hour packing down the session<br>– 1 hour to pack up kit and check resources.<br>– 0.5 hour to review feedback and evaluations<br>☐ Resources ($0) – all contained in Tech Taster Kit |
| **Stakeholders** | ☐ Library Staff: deliver program<br>☐ Local day care: promote program<br>☐ Better Beginnings: provide Tech Taster Kit |
| **Promotion** | ☐ Library newsletter and in-house Flyer.<br>☐ Flyer/ invitation to attend sent to local day care centre. |
| **Evaluation** | Evaluation will be used to determine if a permanent tech explorers' session would be attended at the library, and what resources it might use.<br>Adults will be asked:<br>☐ Have they learnt anything new about using technology with their toddler, if so, what?<br>☐ Would they attend further tech sessions at the library? How often?<br>☐ What was their favourite activity or resource?<br>Children will be presented with a smiley face, neutral face, and frowny face survey the end of the session. They will be asked the question "Today we played with lots of different things – was it fun, just ok, or not very interesting for you?" and invited to point at one of the faces.<br>Children will be presented a picture chart of the resources uses and asked to point out their favourite resource. |

## Program Plan Example – Mini Builders (STEAM)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Program Title** | Mini builders |
| **Target Audience** | 3-5 year olds and their parents or guardians |
| **Background** | Younger children have been keen to participate in the libraries LEGO Club, however small parts make it unsuitable. A version of this activity geared towards younger children will help meet community demand and develop children's problem solving, teamwork and creative skills.<br>Providing this service free to families can enable a learning opportunity for families who might not otherwise have access to a variety of building blocks. |
| **Objectives**<br>Library Outcomes | ☐ The program supports our library objective of stimulating learning, creativity and discovery. |
| Literacy Outcomes | ☐ At each of the sessions we showcase a range of titles from our library collections that relate to the challenge of the day.<br>☐ We encourage children to borrow one of the titles they have used as inspiration in the session and to further explore our collections on this topic.<br>☐ We build communication skills by having the children work in teams and having them present their design to the group. |
| General Capabilities (GC) and Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) | ☐ Critical and Creative Thinking – Mini Builders challenges participants to work together to solve a problem each week, building critical and creative thinking skills.<br>☐ Personal and Social Capability – Participants work together in teams and deliver a short presentation to the group, both mechanisms for building interpersonal and communication skills. |
| **Scope** | Mini Builders will run every Tuesday during school term between 10 – 11 am<br>Each week participants are posed a building challenge that requires them to work individually or in teams to solve. Challenges include – Build a maze with some surprise traps; A hurricane is coming, build the strongest structure you can; Build yourself a wacky pet etc.<br>At the end of the session each group has an opportunity to present their design or solution to the group. |
| **Risk Management** | ☐ Wash and dry blocks at end of each session using wash bags.<br>☐ Provide hand sanitiser prior to session.<br>☐ Ensure resources are suitable for 3-5 (No small parts)<br>☐ If blocks are being used on a table as opposed to the floor, ensure there is no tipping risk. |
| **Accessibility Adaptations or Considerations** | ☐ Supply Duplo, Megabloks, and wooden blocks to suit varying needs of abilities<br>☐ Provide a space where blocks can be accessed at a table or on the floor<br>☐ Consider how each individual challenge can be adapted to suit abilities<br>☐ Provide multiple examples of the challenge (built or images) to encourage a variety of abilities and support English Language Learners. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Cultural Considerations** | The library will do an Acknowledgement of Country prior to the session.<br>For Example:<br>"Here is the land, here is the sky.<br>Here are my friends and here am I.<br>We thank the _____ people for the land on which we play<br>And promise to look after it every single day" |
| **Required Resources** | Duplo, Megabloks, wooden blocks, wash bag, challenge resources, 1 staff member. |
| **Budget** | ☐ 2x Megabloks My First Builder's packs – $52 (one off)<br>☐ Large Duplo Box – $70 (one off)<br>☐ 3x wooden block kit (one off) $35<br>☐ Wash bags – $10 (one off)<br>☐ Assorted challenge resources – approximately $400 per year (some things will be one off such as tape measures or tubs, others may be consumables such as pop sticks or elastic bands.)<br>☐ Staff member time (Approximately 1 hour delivery, 1 hour prep and clean up, 1 hour planning per week.) 3 hours approx. $100 per week x 40 weeks = $4,000<br>☐ Initial promotion = $250 ($150 for print materials and $100 for a boosted post)<br>Total start up budget = $4,817, Ongoing yearly budget = $4,400 |
| **Stakeholders** | Local Kindy, childcare centres or crèches, playgroup, local shopping centre, marketing team, library staff. |
| **Promotion** | ☐ Website, social media, print material (some placed near junior collection), local radio.<br>☐ Information sent to local childcare centres, community centres, child health nurse clinic, and crèches. |
| **Evaluation** | A survey will be offered to families at the end of each term addressing the objectives of the program. Staff will have an informal discussion and review of the program considering survey feedback and anecdotal feedback from families. Decisions will be made for any modifications needed and future planning for the next term. |

> *You can't stay in your corner of the forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.*
>
> *– A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh*

# Planning a session

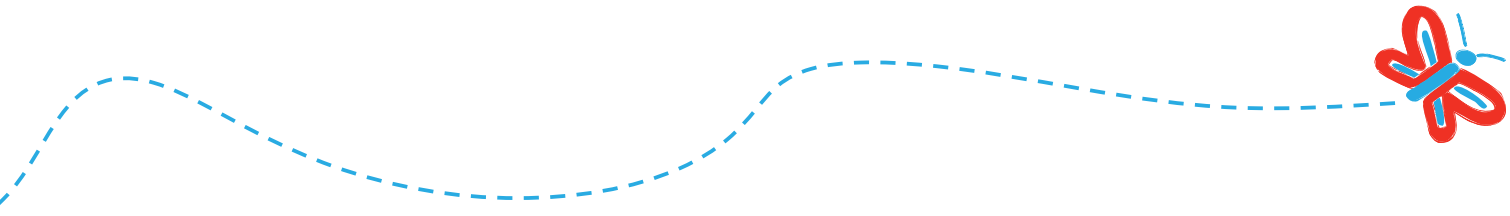
## Session Plan Template

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Program Title** | Enter title of program | | |
| **Date** | Enter date | **Staff Member** | Enter staff member planning session |
| **Topic** | Provide a summary of the focus of the session. | | |
| **Relevant links if applicable** | Enter any links which might be useful to support delivery of the session. | | |
| **Learning Outcome** | Make a note of any risks or hazards that need to be considered (small parts, social distancing, tipping or fall risks). | | |
| **Access & Inclusion considerations** | Make a note of any considerations to ensure the session is accessible. | | |
| **Resources** | List all resources required to deliver the session. | | |
| **Set up** | Make any notes for how the session should be set up. | | |
| **Introduction** | Describe how the session will be introduced. | | |
| **Steps** | Outline the steps for the session. | | |
| **Conclusion** | Describe how the session will be concluded. | | |

## Session plan Example – Mini Builders

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Program Title** | Mini Builders | | |
| **Date** | Week 3 – Who sunk the boat? | **Staff Member** | Enter staff member planning session |
| **The Challenge** | In small groups, or with your grown-ups, build a boat that floats.<br>Test:<br>☐ How many buttons or counters can it hold and still float?<br>☐ How long can it float?<br>☐ How can it be adapted to move? (perhaps by adding a sail and wind)<br>☐ How many toy cars (or similar) can it hold and still float?. | | |
| **Relevant links if applicable** | instructables.com/Basic-duplo-boat<br>frugalfun4boys.com/lego-duplo-building-ideas | | |
| **Learning Outcome** | Children will develop problem solving, critical thinking and communication skills through working together to solve the problem. | | |
| **Access & Inclusion considerations** | ☐ Block boats can be as complicated or difficult as the child is capable. Different pieces will be made available to suit different abilities.<br>☐ Staff will encourage participants to adapt their boat to continue challenging children. For example, once a child has created a boat that can float, they will be asked how many buttons it can hold and still float, they could then be encouraged to adapt their boat to be able to hold more buttons and test if that is possible.<br>☐ If participants are struggling with the task, prompts can be used to support their learning. For example, they could be asked to think about what a real boat looks like, what is it about the boat that helps it to float, how could they make a stronger base, etc | | |
| **Resources** | ☐ MegaBloks, Duplo<br>☐ Buttons or counters<br>☐ Timer<br>☐ Tubs or trays<br>☐ Material for adaptions such as sails (e.g. paper, fabric, pop sticks, tape, playdough etc.)<br>☐ Water<br>☐ Paper towel to wipe up potential spills or a towel to sit on the table under the tub or trays<br>☐ Books on boats and floating<br>☐ Pictures of different types of boats. | | |
| **Set up** | 1. Place trays filled with a small amount of water on two of the tables.<br>2. Have Megabloks and Duplo available on another table and on the floor.<br>3. Keep remaining resources on a trolley until needed.<br>4. Display library books related to the activity. | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | Discuss boats and floating. Ask the group questions such as:<br>1. What do you know about boats?<br>2. Can you think of other things that float?<br>3. What do these things have in common?<br>4. What causes a boat to sink?<br>5. Refer to library books chosen to support the session as relevant. |
| **Steps** | 1. Ask children and their grown-ups to get into groups of two or three and create a boat out of provided blocks. Encourage them to talk to each other and plan their build.<br>2. As groups finish, they can go to the tubs and test their creation. If it doesn't float, prompt the children to think about why it isn't floating and how it can be improved. If the boat does float, challenge children to think about how they could improve their boat – for example by testing how many buttons it can hold and still float and challenging them to create a boat that can float and hold more.<br>3. Further challenge students to adapt their boats by using other materials available.<br>Consider initially giving students a time limit for creating their boat. |
| **Conclusion** | Encourage the groups to share the process they went through to get to their final boat creation.<br>Ask the children what they thought of the activity and if they have any suggestions for future activities.<br>Everyone packs up the blocks and other materials if used together. |



# Alphabetical list of links

ABS Census Community Profiles **abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data**

ATSILIRN Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services **atsilirn.aiatsis.gov.au/protocols**

**Australian Curriculum General Capabilities**

Australian Early Development Census Data **aedc.gov.au/data**

Australian Museum **australian.museum**

Australia Reads **australiareads.org.au**

Better Beginnings **better-beginnings.com.au**

Business.gov.au: Grants and Programs **business.gov.au/grants-and-programs**

Children's Book Council of Australia: Western Australian Branch **wa.cbca.org.au**

Child Safety Risk Management Resources **childsafety.gov.au/resources/child-safety-risk-management-resources**

**Early Years Learning Framework**

Fremantle Press Authors and Artists Directory **fremantlepress.wpengine.com/surname/a/**

**Government of Western Australia Community Grants Programs**

Home Education WA **hewa.wa.edu.au**

Indigenous Literacy Day **indigenousliteracyfoundation.org.au/ild**

**Indigenous Literacy Foundation : Community Publishing Program**

**Literacy Matters: State Library of Western Australia Literacy Strategy 2017-2027**

The Literature Centre Authors and Illustrators **thelitcentre.org.au/artists-we-work-with**

My School (WA School Profiles including NAPLAN data) **myschool.edu.au/**

NAIDOC Week **naidoc.org.au**

National Science Week **scienceweek.net.au**

Paper Bird Speakers Agency **paperbird.com.au/schools/speakers-agency**

Public Libraries Online **plo.slwa.wa.gov.au**

Schools Online **det.wa.edu.au/schoolsonline/home.do**

STAR Net: Science-Technology Activities & Resources for Libraries **starnetlibraries.org**

Starting Blocks childcare directory **startingblocks.gov.au**

WA Young Reader Books Awards **wayrba.org.au**


## Information and enquiries

State Library of Western Australia
Perth Cultural Centre
25 Francis Street
PERTH WA 6000

Email: **bbadmin@slwa.wa.gov.au**
Telephone: **(08) 9427 3130**