

Te ako ngātahi

Learning together

Ko koe, tō tamaiti, me tō whare akoranga kōhungahunga

You, your child, and your early learning service

Your child's learning starts the day they are born. They will learn at home, with whānau (family), in your community, and at their early learning service. This brochure suggests lots of ways for you to follow your child's interests and enjoy learning together.

Both at home and at your early learning service, your child can learn skills that will help them get on with others, live happy and useful lives, be creative, and succeed in their learning, both now and at school.

Parents are children's first teachers. There are lots of ways you can help your child to learn. One of the most important things you can do is to talk with your child. This gives them the best possible start for a lifetime of learning. It's always good to talk to your child in your home language, using the words you feel most comfortable with.

Most of all, young tamariki (children) learn through play and through everyday activities. When you play with your child and include them in your daily activities, you are helping them to learn.



Early learning services in Aotearoa New Zealand

At early learning services in Aotearoa New Zealand, tamariki (children) have lots of opportunities to play and take part in everyday activities like cooking and gardening.

The kaiako (teachers) at your early learning service will help your child to learn by encouraging them to play with things like paint, clay, playdough, building blocks, water, and sand. Sometimes this will be messy! Kaiako will join in with your child's play, talk with them, and help them build new skills and knowledge.

At your early learning service, kaiako will help your child to feel at home by making links with your home language (or languages) and culture. They will welcome your help to learn more about these.

Kaiako will also work to build a strong, two-way relationship with you and to make sure that the experiences and activities offered at the service meet your wishes and hopes for your child.

At all early learning services in Aotearoa New Zealand, children's learning is based on *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. *Te Whāriki* is a bicultural curriculum underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi).

Your early learning service will keep you up to date with your child's progress. For example, kaiako will share your child's paintings, games, constructions, and dramatic play with you by using videos, photos, and explanations of their learning.

Choosing a service for your child

In Aotearoa New Zealand, you can choose from many different kinds of early learning services. All these services must meet standards set by the government. Sometimes you may have to wait for a place for your child.

For children aged three and above, attending an early learning service for up to 20 hours is free. Some families can also get help with paying for early learning services through Work and Income.

Kindergartens

All kaiako at kindergartens are trained and registered. Tamariki from two years old to school age can attend, usually during school hours.

Kōhanga reo

At kōhanga reo, tamariki and whānau use te reo Māori (Māori language) to learn and talk with each other. Whānau are actively involved in running the service.

Education and care services

At least 50% of staff are trained and registered. Tamariki from birth to school age can go to these services either all day or for part of the day.



Early Learning Services in Aotearoa New Zealand

Playcentres

Playcentres are for tamariki from birth to school age. They are led by parents and whānau (families). Playcentres also provide training in parenting and early learning.

Home-based education and care

These services can be run in the child's home or the carer's home. The carer is supported by a qualified early learning kaiako.

Playgroups

Most playgroups are set up and run by community groups, and sessions last for up to three hours. Parents usually need to stay with their tamariki.

Learning about feelings

Tamariki (children) often have strong feelings – they might be happy, excited, nervous, angry, or frightened. Kaiako (teachers) at your early learning service will help your child to understand their feelings, to talk about them, and to express them in positive ways. These are skills that will help your child to be happy and successful in their daily life.

You can do this at home, too:

- » You can support your child to understand how they are feeling by helping them find the words to name their feelings in your home language or in English (for example, “I think you might be feeling very excited just now”).
- » When your child is upset, look for things that will help them to be calm. For example, you could play soft music, sing waiata (songs), blow bubbles together, dig in the garden, or share a story.
- » Help your child to find ways to deal with feelings like anger, nervousness, or worry (for example, by taking deep breaths or through active physical play, like jumping or running).



Learning to get on with others

Right from birth, all tamariki need to feel safe, secure, and loved. They need to know that adults in their life are carefully noticing and responding to their interests, wants, and needs.

At an early learning service, your child will learn to trust and respond to other caring adults. And they'll learn how to get on with other tamariki – to play together, to share, and to respect others' feelings and needs.

You can do this at home, too:

- » Help your child to take turns, share, and grow friendships with other children. For example, you could say, “When you’ve had two minutes on the swing, could you let Theo have a go?” or “Let’s cut the apple into six pieces, and you can give three of them to Hana.”
- » Help them to learn ways to deal with conflict and solve problems (for example, by noticing how others are feeling and thinking about how they could help them).
- » Tell them you’re proud of them when they take turns, share, or solve a social conflict.

Talking, reading, and writing – make it fun!

Language is the key to all your child's learning.

At your early learning service, activities like talking, singing, playing, listening to stories, and drawing help your child to build the skills they need for learning to read and write.

Kaiako (teachers) will talk to your child and encourage them to talk about what they are doing. They will read stories and sing nursery rhymes, play word games or rhyming games, and sing waiata together.

You can do this at home, too:

- » Have back and forth “conversations” with your baby or toddler. Notice their actions, sounds, words, and what they're looking at, and respond to these.
- » As soon as your baby can hold objects, give them books made of fabric or cardboard to play with. Don't worry if they put the book in their mouth – they learn from doing that, too. Talk to them about the pictures in the books – infants soon learn to recognise pictures of familiar things.
- » Talk to your child about what they're interested in. Once they start using words, keep the conversation going.
- » Talk and sing with your child in your home language, and use the words you're both most comfortable with. Talk about the everyday things you're doing, and encourage them to tell you about what's happening.
- » Look at picture books together, and read stories to your child. Make it fun. Very young tamariki (children) might only want to look at books for a few minutes, and that's OK. They're still learning about how books work.
- » Sing songs and tell stories from your own culture. You could use puppets or soft toys to help tell the story.
- » Go to the library and let your child choose the books they want to take home. It's free to borrow children's books from the library. Your local library might have free story times for tamariki, too.
- » Encourage your child to draw and make marks – for example, with pencils, crayons, paint, or chalk. It doesn't matter at all if the picture doesn't look like anything you recognise.
- » With your child, look out for letters and words around your home and when you go out. For example, you could look for the first letter of your child's name.



Maths, science, and technology – make it fun!

Tamariki (children) learn about maths, science, and technology by exploring the world around them, talking about what they notice, and finding out how things work.

Your early learning service has lots of activities that will help your child learn about maths, science, and technology. They'll learn to be curious about the world around them by looking at plants or animals, playing with materials like sand and water, and thinking about how machines work.

Tamariki will learn about maths ideas by counting, measuring, and sorting, and also through drawing and active play. For example, kaiako (teachers) might talk to tamariki while they're playing games, using words like "over", "under", "through", "behind", or "above".

You can do this at home, too:

- » Encourage your child to be curious and ask lots of questions.
- » Play counting games with your child. Count as you walk up and down steps. Or count the number of plates as you set the table.
- » When you're at home or on outings with your child, talk to them about how things feel, look, sound, taste, and smell.
- » Build things with different shapes and materials. Build a tower or make a castle out of wooden blocks, cans from your kitchen cupboard, or empty boxes.
- » Help your child notice numbers, shapes, sizes, and patterns in your everyday activities. Play "spot the number" on letter boxes or car number-plates when you're out walking. Or count the number of red cars in the supermarket car park.
- » Talk to your child about what they notice as you help them cook, wash dishes, dig in the garden, build sandcastles at the beach, or play with water.

Carefully guide the way your child uses devices like phones, tablets, or computers, and limit the time they spend in front of a screen. For healthy learning and development, it's best to avoid screen time for under two-year-olds and to limit it to one hour per day for children aged two years or older – less is best!





Art, music, dance, and drama – make it fun!

Tamariki (children) can express their feelings and ideas through art, music, dance, and drama. Music, dance, drama, and art activities are great ways to help your child learn about their home language and culture.

Early learning services are full of ideas and materials that will spark your child's imagination. These could include dress-up materials, musical instruments, paints, clay, playdough, wood, and collage materials. With the help of kaiako (teachers), tamariki will be able to safely use simple tools, such as scissors, saws, and hammers. The kaiako will encourage and join in with your child's creative and imaginative play.

You can do this at home, too:

- » Play, dance, and make up games with your child. Let them take the lead.
- » Encourage your child to use their imaginations – for example, by dressing up, turning household objects into things like boats, spaceships, or shops, and pretending to be sailors, astronauts, or shopkeepers. Join in with their games, even if the boat sinks and you're eaten by a crocodile!
- » Have fun with different art materials, like paint, chalk, crayons, clay or playdough, wool, and harakeke (flax). With your child, make a forest using twigs, soil, and leaves, or draw in the sand with sticks on the beach.
- » Show your child that you enjoy and appreciate their artwork by asking them about it and displaying it in your home.
- » Listen to music, sing, and dance together.
- » Make a musical instrument, for example, by putting sand or stones in a tin or plastic jar. Shake it in time to the music as you sing or dance.