

How to Shape a Home Learning Environment to Boost Children's Development?

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Every parent, whether homeschooling their child or not, wants to ensure that the home environment is one that fosters the rounded development of their little one. A [study from Peeples](#) - a UK-based charity supporting parents/carers, babies and children to learn together - shows that a positive home learning environment is the single most important factor in ensuring children's developmental outcomes through childhood.

The charity champions the small and everyday ways in which parents and caregivers with younger children can support their child's learning in everyday life. Peeples believes that a child is best placed to grow in a beneficial and positive way while using songs, stories, activities, and discussion.

Key home learning environment messages that we share with families

What you do with your baby or child at home really makes a difference to how they get on at school.

You can help your child by:

- listening and talking with them - lots!
- singing songs and rhymes
- sharing books and stories every day
- pointing out letters, words and sounds
- having fun making marks, drawing or writing
- pointing out signs or logos when you're out or at home
- talking about and playing with different numbers, shapes and colours
- going out and about - for example, to the park
- giving your child opportunities to play with other children.



These are all things you can do as part of everyday life.

Beneficial Activities to Focus On

There are many ways in which to shape a beneficial learning environment in your home. Firstly, let's explore the beneficial activities that are heralded by [People](#) as the most important ones for your child, specifically for younger learners.

It may sound very obvious but listening and talking with your child a lot is very important. Currently, in a society with a lot of focus on technology, parents can find themselves paying more attention to their phones than their little one. Emails, work, life - a lot happens through our technology. And let's not forget that there are lots of positive ways in which technology can be a part of the learning experience and the source of unique [learning materials](#), however, it needs to be interactive to be beneficial. For example, check [online games](#) for kids here. Parents and homeschoolers cannot respond adequately to their child's cues if they are preoccupied with technology.

So, talking, listening, and having conversations. This is the best place to start. Showing your little one attention is the best way to ensure they thrive. In the same vein, singing songs and rhymes with your young learner is a great way to help them develop and grow, plus it's a very fun way to spend time together.



Sharing books and stories and exploring letters, words, and sounds at home is also a great way to aid your child's development, specifically to help their language and literacy skills. In an [article for the Child Development Institute](#), Pam Myers, BSEd, shares that storytelling benefits children's language skills, memory and provides them with an opportunity to learn more about the world around them. She encourages parents and caregivers to tell their children stories that they have made up, as well as to tell stories about their own childhood, their child's childhood, or about specific things in their family history. She says:

“Storytelling connects. It connects children with history, families, and each other.”

Another way in which to ensure the home is a beneficial learning environment is to focus on drawing and writing activities, as well as to notice and utilise signs and logos around the house to stimulate creative and analytical thinking skills. You can also play with numbers, shapes, and colours within the home.

Everything in the home is an opportunity to explore, discuss and learn for your child.

Research - Play Is Key

I am an advocate of play-based learning, and have written a longer blog about the [benefits](#) on the Kid's Academy blog if you want to read more about this. I mention it here because it is ongoingly important as a home educator, or/and those concerned about their child's development, to incorporate this way of learning into the everyday. Let's not forget - children are not mini-adults, they are children. And what they do best is play!

[Recent research from Unicef](#) explores how you can promote and support environments of play and nurture in the home. They state that the learning activities that aid curiosity and foster cognitive development include reading, telling stories and naming, counting, and drawing. They also recognise the importance of play, saying that it helps 'stimulate children's minds and bodies' whilst helping them practice social roles, and learn about their culture and environment.

The study speaks about how young learners' socio-emotional development is aided by parents and other caregivers incorporating activities such as playing and singing into daily activities.



Educational theorist and psychologist, Jean Piaget, was the first person to study the integral way in which play helps children develop intellectually. His [theory of play](#) stated that as a child grows up their environment and play should encourage their continued brain and language development.

He felt that children needed the appropriate resources and stimuli in their immediate environment as they grow, to ensure they can develop - particularly with their language development - at a beneficial rate.

Piaget's theory explores the way in which children use two key processes to grow. These are:

- Assimilation - the acquiring of new knowledge and experiences.
- Schema - the adding of the new knowledge into the child's internal patterns of thoughts and behaviours (schemas).

Each experience and learning the child has from the appropriate stimuli in its environment creates a new schemata. This is then stored in the brain and drawn upon by the child when it comes across the same or similar experiences. Piaget theorised that it is these assembled schemata that people use as they interact in, and with, the world. Therefore the more stimulating and varied a child's learning environment, the better equipped they will be to function in the world.

Piaget was a strong believer in the need to foster children's creativity and spoke about this in a famous quote:

“Our real problem is – what is the goal of education? Are we forming children that are only capable of learning what is already known? Or should we try developing creative and innovative minds, capable of discovery from the preschool age on, throughout life?”

Practical Tips for Creating a Beneficial Home Learning Environment

In order to nurture the creative and innovative minds that Piaget spoke so passionately about, let's explore the physical resources and materials you will need within your [homeschooling](#) environment.

Firstly, if you are homeschooling your little ones, or even creating a dedicated play/learning room, try and make sure the space is big enough for your children to move about. Floor space is key and little ones need breathing space, so if possible it's good for there to be a dedicated dance, jump, movement area. If the room you are using is quite small then you can always move dance-time out to the garden. And, if you don't have a garden, then there are always green spaces and parks nearby to utilise.



Next up, are there windows and light coming into the room? These may seem basic requirements but a light, airy space is a great environment for little ones to learn within. You know yourself how stuffy and uncomfortable learning and working within a dark space can feel.

Now, how can you organise books, art materials, colouring books, pens, pencils and musical instruments into the space? Get your child involved in categorising the different learning materials. Make colourful signs and stickers and pop them on boxes that denote where the art supplies, books, numbers live. This is a great way to make what could be an overwhelming task for you to undertake single-handedly, a fun and creative group task.



If art and painting is going to be a part of your learning week, do you have suitable flooring, table coverings so that you don't need to worry about walls/floors getting ruined in the learning process? If everything is checked, then enjoy [coloring](#) your favorite fairy-tale heroes.

Another fun resource you can look into for your playroom is posters. Posters come adorned with so many different stimuli for children to learn from - numbers, letters, logos, signs, artwork, maps, animals... The list is endless and provides ongoing opportunities for you to make learning exploratory and exciting within your home.

Time to Get Creative

Making your home a beneficial learning environment for your child can seem like a daunting task. I hope this blog provides some practical ways in which you can begin that process, along with some interesting information about the reasons investing in your home environment is worth it for your child's continued development.

Arguably your attention, creativity and engagement with your child's learning is the most invaluable resource you can impart. It is also a surefire way to boost your child in all ways and help them grow.

About the author

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Links and references

1. <https://www.peeple.org.uk/sites/www.peeple.org.uk/files/HLE%20leaflet%20for%20professionals%20v2.pdf>
2. <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/child-activities/storytelling-for-children/#gs.afy01y>
3. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/early-childhood-development/home-environment/>
4. <https://www.psychologized.org/jean-piagets-theory-of-play/>

