



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Early Years

Ready family

Ready child

Supporting Independence





Supporting Independence

To help your child to be independent you can

Support your child to be able to separate from you.

Do not share any worries you might have about your child starting school, this will only make them anxious and feel there is something to worry about. Talking about school in a positive and warm way will help your child to be positive too. Build up to separation slowly. Consider how you can make short times away from you positive such as, leaving them with a trusted friend or relative for a short time or making visits to the library or Children's Centre, where you can step back a little and let them explore, whilst always being in sight, will help them to begin to be independent in a safe way.

Interacting with others:

Your child will need to communicate and respond to others throughout their lives. You could support your child to gain independence in this skill, by providing them with reasons to communicate such as, making a request, ask questions, sharing or following non-verbal cues. Your child may use spoken language to carry out this task or they might use other forms of communication such as signing or visual prompts, this will depend on your child's needs. To begin, they will need lots of support and encouragement from you, but given time, lots of praise and opportunities to practise, they will be able to do this independently. The skill is knowing when to step back and let them have a go!



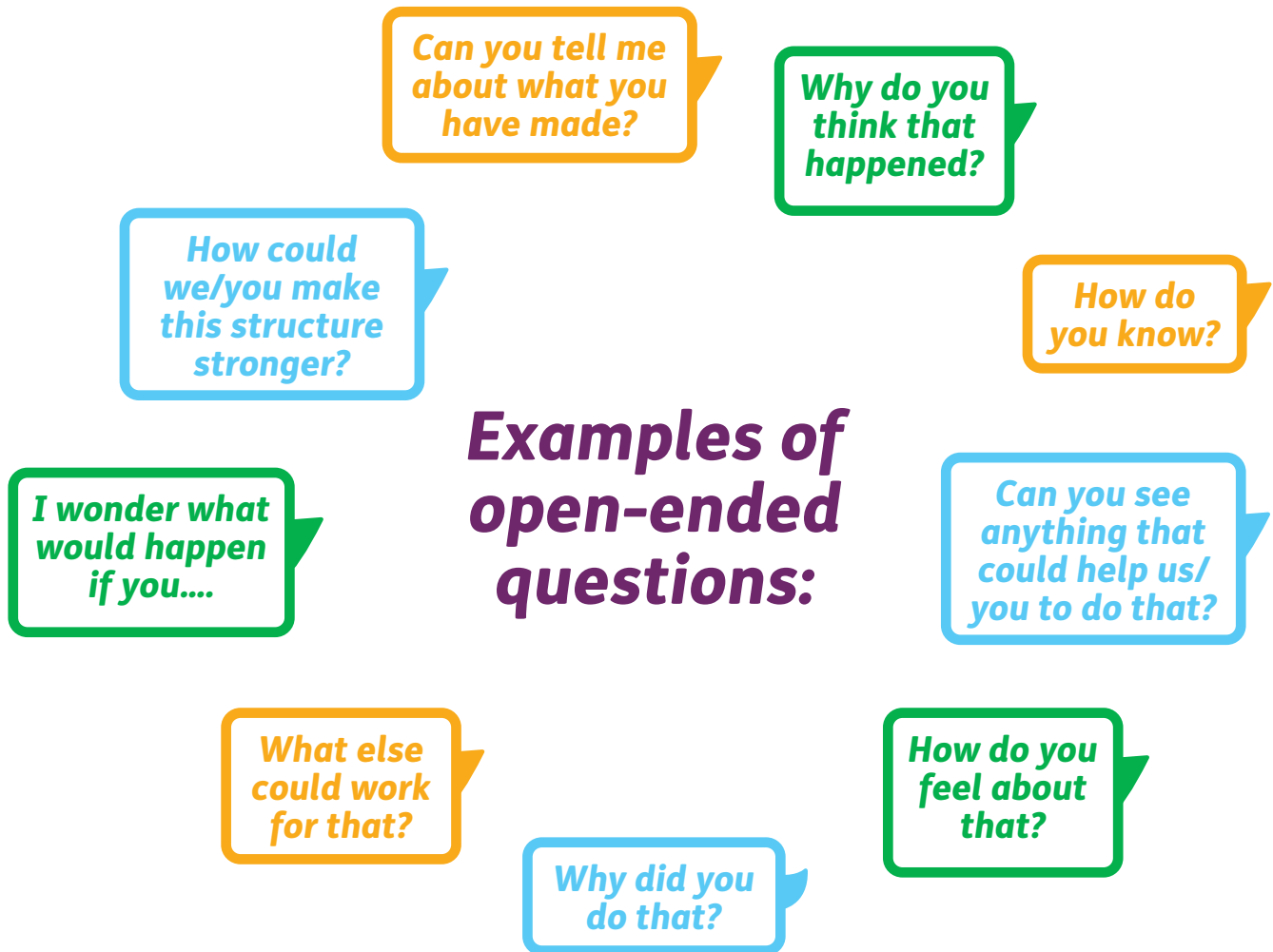
You can support your child with opportunities to interact with others by enrolling them at an Early Years setting (Preschool, Nursery or Registered Childminder). Here they will make friends, learn, develop and grow in independence.

You can also attend Parent/toddler groups with your child. Not only will they make friends and interact with others, you will too. Children learn by seeing as well as doing.

Support your child to ask questions and make requests:

Encourage and support your child to develop a range of strategies through open questions or comments. Great open-ended questions can start with a "Tell me about..." or "I wonder if... or "what do you think?".

Open-ended questions encourage people to think critically about the answer they give. They have to process the enquiry and come up with a response. This can take them time so do not rush them. This type of thinking is an essential skill in child development and one that will help them in school and throughout life.



Confidence in asking for help:

It is essential that your child has the confidence and ability to communicate to an adult when they need help. You can encourage your child to ask for help by praising them when they do without creating a dependency on you.

I really like that you asked me to help you, thank you.

I am so proud of you to notice you needed help and let me know, well done.

Asking for help supports your child to be and feel in control, as they will be guiding their own learning and development, taking charge! You will also feel reassured knowing even when you are not there, they can independently ask or request help from other trusted people, hence their learning and development will continue. If your child does not use words or speak English to request, make sure they have an alternative communication system in place, which is understood by the people who are with them, so they can continue to have a means of asking for help.

Support your child to take on responsibilities.

Provide your child with opportunities to be responsible. For instance, they could be responsible for; putting away their shoes, choosing a book to share or pressing the button on pedestrian crossing and telling you when the green person appears (it remains your parental responsibility to keep children safe around the roads, so please ensure that you hold your child's hand even when you give this level of responsibility).

The [BBC My first day at School](#) is an online game that you can play with your child, it discusses being responsible, and independently looking after your equipment whilst in school.

How to support their self-care

Think about something as simple to you as getting dressed. You know intuitively what clothing suits the weather and task ahead, what you put on first, what part of your body to put it on, and you have the physical dexterity to squeeze, pull, push, adjust and fasten it.

Use small steps to success

Break "getting dressed" into chunks and begin by teaching your child to do the last part independently to give them the feeling of success of "I did it!" Once they have accomplished this, let them do the final two parts independently – and then the final three and four. Ensure you celebrate and reward each success – we all want to do more of something we perceive we are good at.

Show them

Using visuals to support them to order. The self-help skill you are teaching means they are not dependent on you. Support them by telling them each time what comes next. You can lay out the clothes in the right order, take photographs, which you can print off and present on a strip, or use pictures from a website such as Do2learn



Use the same words. Sounds simple doesn't it? But think about it – to keep us warm we have a "jumper", "pullover", "hoodie" "top", "jersey", "sweatshirt", "mac", "coat", "jacket" "waterproof", "cagoule", "anorak".... If several people are using different words, it can add to the confusion, so agree a consistent word for each item of clothing. Writing the word underneath the picture or photograph can help the adult supporting the child use the same word each time.

Time and frame of mind

Learning new skills takes time. Opportunities to practise is key and it is okay when your child does not get it right first time. When you are rushing you are unlikely to be in the right frame of mind to be patient and encourage your child to develop independence. Consider starting to teach them new skills when you have less time pressure – for example, when teaching dressing start at the weekend when you can begin by letting them undress and put on pyjamas (often easier than clothes with buttons and zips too!). By choosing the right time, you are setting both you and your child up for success.

Support their Physical skills

There are a great deal of fine motor skill and hand eye coordination required to dress. Provide games and activities to develop these throughout the day such as inset puzzles, placing clothes pegs on the lip of a bowl, dressing, feeding or washing their teddy, manipulating playdough, sorting and posting objects, and threading games.

Allow the child to practice self-care tasks on you. Can they brush your hair or feed you?

- Small parts of activities: Practice doing a small part of a task each day as it is easier to learn new skills in smaller sections.
- Observation: Have your child to observe other family members performing everyday self-care skills.
- Role play: Self-care tasks such as eating, dressing or brushing teeth with teddy bears. Doing it on others can help learning it before then doing it on yourself.
- Take care of others: Allow the child to brush your hair or teeth first, before brushing their own.
- Timers: to indicate how long they must tolerate an activity they may not enjoy, such as teeth cleaning.

Where else can you get ideas and support?

If your child is not in a setting yet, you can search for suitable childcare (Early Years education) in the comfort of your own home by using our [Childcare Local Offer](#). If you need further support then our [Family Information Service](#) can help you to find suitable childcare.

To help you make an informed decision on the right childcare setting we have some questions that you might want to consider when you make contact with the Early Years Setting ([link here](#)).

If you want to know how to pay for the childcare (Early Years education) then visit the Governments website [Childcare Choices](#) that will provide you with choices on how to pay for the childcare (Early Years education).

Our Children Centre's can also provide you with a timetable of their play and stay sessions here [Children Centre](#).