



## One-Minute Guide to EAL in the Early Years

**English as an Additional Language (EAL)** in the early years is a crucial aspect of early childhood education, especially in a multicultural society. Supporting children who are learning English as an additional language involves understanding their unique needs and providing a nurturing environment that fosters both their linguistic and overall development.

### Understanding EAL in the Early Years

Children with EAL come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and may face challenges in understanding and using English. It's essential to recognise that these children are not only learning a new language but also adapting to a new cultural environment. The process of acquiring a new language can vary significantly among children, with some experiencing a "silent period" where they may not speak much but are actively listening and absorbing the new language. For more information visit the [DfE guidance page](#).

### Key Strategies for Supporting EAL Learners

1. **Create an Inclusive Environment:** Ensure that the learning environment reflects the diverse cultures and languages of the children. Use visual aids, bilingual books, and culturally relevant materials to make the setting welcoming and inclusive.
2. **Model Language Use:** Consistently model the use of English in various contexts. Children learn language through interaction, so engage them in conversations, read aloud, and use songs and rhymes to make learning enjoyable.
3. **Use Visual Supports:** Visual aids such as pictures, gestures, and real objects can help children understand and remember new words. Incorporate visual schedules and labels in both English and the child's home language to support comprehension.
4. **Encourage Home Language Use:** Support the use of the child's home language within the setting. This helps maintain their cultural identity and can facilitate learning English by building on their existing language skills.
5. **Collaborate with Families:** Work closely with families to understand the child's background and language proficiency. Encourage parents to share information about their child's interests and routines and involve them in the learning process.



## Local and National Support

- [EAL Graduated Offer of Support](#) Norfolk County Council provides a comprehensive support program for schools and early years settings, including universal, targeted, and enhanced support levels.
- [EAL Advisory Service](#) offers training, consultation, and assessment services to improve educational outcomes for EAL learners. Contact us through the Early Years Advice Line: 01603 222300 opt. 3.
- [The Bell Foundation](#) offers resources and training for educators to support EAL learners, including strategies for assessment and inclusive teaching practices.
- [NASSEA EAL Assessment Framework](#) provides a structured approach to assessing and supporting EAL learners in the early years.
- [The BBC's Tiny Happy People](#) site is full of excellent advice for both educators and families.

By implementing these strategies and utilising available resources, educators can effectively support EAL learners in the early years, fostering their language development and overall well-being. Remember good Early Years practice is good EAL practice!