

# Skills 4 Life: young people with a learning disability

All children will develop skills at various rates as they grow up. Research has shown that the development of these specific **eight skills** directly links to a child's ability to have their **needs effectively met** and subsequently **reduce challenging behaviours**<sup>1</sup>. Creating a home learning environment is the first step.

## 1. CREATING A HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

There are two important parts of the **home learning environment**:

- **The physical environment** : This includes having toys that stimulate, access to literacy, limiting screen time, engaging in songs and rhymes, and access to visual helpers to aid understanding/communication.
- **The interactions** between the parent/carer and the child. This can include being face to face, listening and looking to what they do and then responding with interest. The key is that most of the time the child leads the interactions.

## 2. KEY SKILLS

These are 5 small, attainable, building blocks that carers can work through with their children in the home learning environment they have created.

## 3. MORE ADVANCED SKILLS

The key skills work act as building blocks and then these skills can be used to further develop more advanced skills over time.

<sup>1</sup>Armstrong, H., Denne, L. D., & Bailey, T. (2021). The role of key skills as a risk marker for the development of challenging behaviour in children and young people who have an intellectual disability The as children people intellectual. *International Journal of Positive Behavioural Support*, 11(2), 3-14.



Key Skill	What is it? Examples
Making a request	Communicating what they would like from another person e.g. Asking for a specific toy to play with
Waiting	Demonstrating patience and restraint when what they want is delayed e.g. Waiting for food to be prepared when hungry.
Accepting removals/ transitions/ sharing/turn taking	Accepting the collaborative involvement of others in tasks, and move smoothly between tasks when they need to end e.g. Playing games involving peers, taking turns, and accepting when it's time to pack the game away and do something else.
Completing tasks when requested	Doing what is asked of them without the need for repeated prompting e.g. Putting their coat on when asked to, to get ready to go out.
Accepting 'no'	Accepting not having demands met e.g. Being able to accept not being allowed to do certain activities.
Advanced Skill	What is it? Examples
Following directions related to health and safety	Following instructions from a parent or carer which help them to stay safe e.g. 'hold my hand whilst crossing the road.'
Completing daily living skills related to health and safety	Completing tasks as part of a daily routine to maintain their health e.g. brushing teeth.
Tolerating situations related to health and safety	Tolerating situations they may not enjoy but persist with anyway to stay safe e.g. wearing a seat belt.

Learning these skills is a **medium to long term process** taking patience and persistence. It's important to go at a **pace that suits your child best**.

Remember the importance of once having learned the skill, **apply it** as much as possible by getting them to practise in a **variety of different situations**, providing lots of **praise** to reinforce the behaviour so it becomes a long-term habit.

