Unit 1

An introduction to working with children

In this unit you will learn:

1. The types of settings and local provision for children
2. How to prepare for placement
3. The responsibilities and limits of your role in placements
4. Children’s individual needs and necessity for fairness and inclusive practice
5. Your own preferred learning style and how to develop relevant study skills
You have just started your course. You think that you would like to work with children but need to gain knowledge and understanding. People sometimes ask if you know what age of child you would like to work with, or where. You are not sure because you do not really know what is available.

By the end of this section you will know about the type of settings where adults work with children and you will also have found out about what is available in your area.
The variety of settings available for children

There are different types of settings that work with children. These may be funded by local authorities, parents themselves or by voluntary organisations (sometimes known as charities). To make things more complicated, some settings are funded by a mixture of all three! In general, settings that work with children can be grouped into four, as the spider diagram below shows.

**Private, e.g. crèche at a shopping centre**
These are profit-making services. They will have an owner or be run by a company.

**Independent, e.g. private school**
These are services that are provided independently of the state and do not rely on government funding. This term is usually used in relation to schools. Independent schools may choose not to follow the National Curriculum because they do not receive government funding.

**Statutory, e.g. schools**
These are services that have to be available by law, i.e. through legislation which requires either the government or local authorities to provide them. Schools are a good example of a statutory service. They exist because there is a law that states that all children should be educated from 5 to 16 years and that this education should be free and provided by the government.

**Voluntary, e.g. parent and toddler group run by a local church**
These are services provided by organisations such as charities where some or all of their funding comes from donations.

Local provision for children

The charts on the next page show you some of the types of provision that are available.

**Child care and education**
Childcare helps parents who work. For children under 5 years old, childcare facilities are usually available from 8am until 6pm throughout the year, although childminders and nannies may have more flexible hours. Children may attend whole days or sessions depending on their parents’ needs.

Childcare settings in England usually deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage as most settings will receive some funding from the government. This means that adults working in these settings will need to observe children and plan activities. Liaising with parents is an important part of the adult’s responsibility as children may spend long periods of time in settings and parents will need to know about their day.

Jargon buster

**Legislation** Laws passed by Parliament

Did you know?

The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is set to replace the current Birth to Three Matters and Foundation Stage curricula in September 2008.

You can find out more about the Early Years Foundation Stage at the following website: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/eyfs
### Childcare settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childminders</td>
<td>Care and education for children in the childminder’s home</td>
<td>From birth upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nannies</td>
<td>Care and education for children in the child’s home</td>
<td>From birth upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace nurseries</td>
<td>Care and education for children in a building where parents work</td>
<td>3–6 months upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day care centres</td>
<td>Care and education for children</td>
<td>3–6 months upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Centres, i.e. SureStart centres</td>
<td>Care and education for children. Other services for parents may be available in the building including health and social services. After-school provision may be available. Training for other professionals may be organised from the centre</td>
<td>3–6 months upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crèches</td>
<td>Sessional care for parents who need a safe place for their child to stay while they are doing something else, for example shopping, at the sports centre, on holiday</td>
<td>Often from 2 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Out-of-school provision

Out-of-school provision provides a safe environment in which children can play and relax. It also allows parents to work. Adults working in these settings will need to provide play opportunities for children and know how to observe their play needs. In addition, they will need to liaise with parents and schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>After-school clubs, i.e. extended schools</td>
<td>Care and play provision for children after school ends</td>
<td>5 years upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday clubs</td>
<td>Care and play provision for children during holidays</td>
<td>5 years upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational settings:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery schools</td>
<td>Pre-school education – likely to be sessional or similar to a school day</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-schools</td>
<td>Pre-school education – likely to be sessional or similar to a school day</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant schools</td>
<td>To provide education. In England, state schools follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum</td>
<td>5–7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>To provide education. In England, state schools follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum</td>
<td>5–11 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A new family has arrived in your area. They have a baby aged 6 months and a child who is 4 years old. What children’s services would be available for them?

Other settings

There are many other settings and services for parents and their children. These may vary according to where you live.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent and toddler groups</td>
<td>These help parents meet each other and allow children to play with a variety of toys and equipment. Some parents and toddler groups also provide support and advice for parents. Parents have overall responsibility for their children. They may be held at a Children’s Centre.</td>
<td>0–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop-in play sessions</td>
<td>These help parents meet each other and allow children to play with a variety of toys and equipment. Some groups also provide support and advice for parents. They may be held at a Children’s Centre or toy library.</td>
<td>0–5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toy library</td>
<td>Places where parents and children can borrow toys and equipment. Many toy libraries also have play sessions.</td>
<td>Birth upwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td>Many leisure centres and groups provide clubs and activities for babies, children and their families, e.g. baby swim classes, Brownies, Beavers, football, Tumbletots.</td>
<td>Birth upwards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Find out!

Find out about the different types of early years provision available locally. You can do this by:

- using the local phone book
- visiting the library (they may have leaflets)
- looking in the What’s on section of the local newspaper
- contacting the local Children’s Information Service, which is run by the local authority to help parents find out more about children’s services in their area. Your local Children’s Information Service is likely to have a website; you may be able to access it via your local authority’s website or by trying an Internet search.

Think about it

A new family has arrived in your area. They have a baby aged 6 months and a child who is 4 years old. What children’s services would be available for them?
Multi-agency work and professionals and agencies working with children

The term multi-agency work is used to describe the way in which many early years settings work closely with other professionals such as health visitors, speech and language therapists and social workers. This is because it is recognised that children and their families may need a range of support. Some settings such as Children’s Centres have been set up with this in mind, and you may find that alongside the nursery there is, for example, a baby clinic or a Job Centre.

As part of this course, you will need to learn how to work with other professionals who may work in different ways with families. (See also Unit X, pages XX–XX.)

Back to the real world

You should now know that there is a wide range of settings that work with children. You should also be aware of the provision available in your area.

1. Give an example of statutory provision in your local area.
2. Give an example of a setting that works with children under 3 years.
3. For each setting that you have given, explain its purpose and the role of people who work there.
Section 2

How to prepare for placement

In the real world

In the next few days you will be starting in a new placement. You feel anxious about this as it will be your first work placement. You are not sure what to wear or how to make a good first impression.

By the end of this section you will know how to prepare for a work placement, what you should wear and how to make a good start.
Expectations of placements

While placements are happy to have learners, the people who work there will expect you to:

➜ attend on placement days
➜ be punctual and appropriately dressed
➜ be polite and show respect to staff, children and parents
➜ bring any paperwork required such as placement diaries
➜ provide information about activities and observations that need to be carried out in plenty of time
➜ listen, take notes and learn about the setting
➜ show enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

A work placement’s priority is to work with children and their families, so while placements are usually happy to help learners, they cannot do this if their work with children will be affected. This means that your placement supervisor may only have limited amounts of time to work with you, so you will need to ensure that you are on time for any meetings and listen carefully to instructions and information.

Appropriate dress and behaviour

Every work placement will have its own code of behaviour, so it is a good idea to phone in advance to find out whether there is anything that you should or should not wear. Most schools will expect a smarter look than in nurseries and not allow you to wear jeans. Below are some general points that you might find useful.

Clothing

Practical, easy-to-wash clothing is always best when working with young children. Most adults working with children have items of clothing that they only wear at work. They know that paint often stains and that their clothing might get messy.

Tips for good practice

Choosing your clothing

➜ Check what staff members are wearing and adjust your clothing accordingly.
➜ Avoid any large branded T-shirts or sweatshirts or those with messages and slogans.
➜ Aim for a smart, casual look.
➜ Avoid short skirts and dresses as you will be getting down to interact with children and bending over.
Footwear
In general terms, you should avoid high heels or heavy shoes as these could harm a child if you stepped on them accidentally. Since you will be on your feet most of the day, low comfortable shoes are best, although you will need to check whether you can wear trainers.

Personal hygiene
As well as clothing, it is important that you look clean and tidy. Preventing the spread of infection is vital in all settings working with young children. This means that your hands, nails and skin must be kept clean. If you have long hair, you should consider tying it back. This will not only help you to look tidy, it may also prevent you from getting head lice.

Make-up and jewellery
Working with children is a practical occupation, not glamorous. Your make-up and jewellery should reflect this otherwise you will not be taken seriously.

Did you know?
Head lice are unpleasant parasites that live in the hair and are easily picked up in placements with children. You should brush and comb your hair thoroughly to help prevent head lice.

Tips for good practice

Wearing the right make-up and jewellery
 ➔ Nails should be kept short and usually unvarnished as you may be expected to help in the preparation and serving of food and drinks. Keep jewellery to the minimum for the same reason.
 ➔ Avoid wearing dangly earrings in case a baby or child accidentally pulls at one and rips your ear lobe!
 ➔ Keep make-up to a minimum – the natural look is best and actually looks more grown up.

Behaviour
The key to a successful placement is to try to fit in. This means that your behaviour should be similar to that of other staff. You should try always to be courteous, patient and thoughtful of others.

Time-keeping
It might seem obvious but one of the most important things you must do on placement is to be there on time and, ideally, a few minutes early. This is an essential point to remember at all stages in your training but also later in your career (see Unit 6, pages XX–XX). Being punctual gives a good impression. It shows that you care enough about the course and the placement to get there on time. If you cannot attend your placement, you should always contact both the setting and your college tutor. You will need to have an extremely good reason why you cannot attend. Remember, too, that your college has to show that you have completed the practical training element of the course.
A positive attitude

In order to do well on placement, you will need to show that you have a positive attitude. This means showing your enthusiasm as well as being there on time and wearing appropriate dress. Showing a positive attitude means smiling, listening and genuinely taking an interest in the children and the work of the setting. Learners who have a positive attitude are willing to volunteer for jobs, stay behind a little later if needed and are generally ready to help out.

You will achieve the most from your placement if you show a positive attitude.

You should now feel confident that you can make a good impression in the first few days of your placement.

1. Explain why it is important to be punctual.
2. Describe how you might dress to fit in.
Section 3

The responsibilities and limits of your role in placements

In the real world

You are aware that, as a learner, you have various responsibilities. Your tutor has told you that it is also important to be aware of the limitations of your role. You are not sure quite what this means or what you should do about it.

By the end of this section you will understand your responsibilities and the limits of your role as a learner.
The responsibilities and limits of your role

As a learner you have various responsibilities, but there are also limitations on what you can do. It is important that you understand the limits of your role in placement. The guidelines in this section are very general and you will need some further guidance specific to your placement. A good starting point is, of course, to listen to both your tutor and placement supervisor.

Ways in which you are responsible to children

Children see you as an adult, as someone they can trust and not simply a learner. This means that you have responsibilities towards children in the same way that any adult does. Below are some key ways in which you will need to be responsible.

Health and safety

You must follow the setting's health and safety procedures in order to keep children safe. This involves simple things such as closing doors behind you and making sure that you do not bring anything into the setting that could harm children, such as matches or lighters. You should also bear in mind that children will look and copy your actions, so your behaviour must always help children to be safe and play safely. The case study below shows what might happen if you fail to do this.

Case study

Setting a good example

Mark is a learner on placement. He is loved by the children and enjoys their attention. He shows a group of children how he can run on a high wall and jump off at the end. A few hours later, one of the children copies what Mark has done but falls and breaks his arm. When his mother talks to him, he says that he wanted to do the same as Mark.

1. Why is it important to remember that children will copy your actions?
2. What did Mark do that was dangerous?
3. Why is it important to think through your actions when working with children?

Health and safety is covered in more detail in Unit 3, pages XX–XX.

Child protection

Sadly, not all adults are safe to be with children. Some adults abuse children, so it is important that you work with children in ways that will help them to be safe and learn about safe behaviour.

Every setting will have a child protection policy. You will need to find out whether you must wear a badge, how to sign in and in what situations you may work with children. It is usual for settings to insist that you should never be alone with children – this is important for your own protection, too.
You should also be aware of how much physical contact you may give children. Learners often find that children are keen to hug and touch them. While this might be appropriate with young children, it is unlikely to be encouraged with older children. Try to notice the amount of physical contact that other staff use with children as this is likely to be appropriate for the children’s age and stage of development.

**Managing children’s behaviour**

Children can often become silly and excited when they are with learners because they see them as being friendly. It is important that you find out about your setting’s policy in relation to managing children’s behaviour, for example in what type of situations you may intervene and how to do so. You will also need to be aware of your own actions when working with children, since there is a fine balance between playing with children and encouraging them to become silly or stopping them when they are meant to be doing an activity. It will be necessary to look at how experienced staff manage children’s behaviour and to notice the ‘rules’ and conduct that is expected.

**Case study**

**Setting an example for children**

Hannah is on placement in a Reception class. The teacher asks her to sit with the children at story time. During story time, Hannah keeps talking to one of the children next to her. She lets the child sit on her knee and tickles her. The child giggles loudly and the other children start to get silly. The teacher becomes cross and eventually asks Hannah to start tidying the art area.

1. Explain why the teacher became cross.
2. Why is Hannah in danger of not following child protection procedures?
3. How should Hannah have behaved?
Focus on Starting placement

Starting placement for the first time can feel very daunting. It is, however, essential as this is the way that you will practise your skills. You can help yourself get off to a flying start on placement if you take time to read up about the setting. Many settings now have their own website so it is worth doing a little background reading. You can find out what you should wear and the times you will attend from your tutor.

It is essential that you work out how to get to placement. If you are using public transport, you will need to be familiar with the timings and routes. Being late on placement is a real no-no and makes a very bad impression.

When you arrive, make sure that you introduce yourself clearly. It has been known for learners to be mistaken for supply staff or interviewees. Remember also that first impressions count and that you should try and show that you are enthusiastic – smiling goes a long way!

Q I have started on placement and am finding it really uncomfortable in the staff room. No one really talks to me.

A It can be hard being the newcomer in a setting. The main thing is not to take this personally but to remember that other staff already know each other and probably want to ‘catch up’ at break times. If you feel uncomfortable about being ‘left out’, you might like to take a magazine with you or something else to do so that you do not feel isolated. Offering to help by washing up mugs can make you popular so is worth a try. Most learners find that over time staff become more friendly as they get to know you.

Q I am really shy and am worrying about how I will cope on placement.

A Most learners feel a bit nervous before they start on placement. If you are shy, this can make it seem even more daunting. There are many strategies that you can use to overcome your shyness. The first is to focus on the needs of others rather than yourself. Think about how smiling might make it easier for people to greet you. Many shy people also feel especially worried when others ask them questions. A good tactic here is to turn things around so that you initiate some of the questions, such as asking ‘How long have you been working here?’ or ‘Where did you train?’ This means that you can show interest in others while not having to worry about what you might be saying. The more effort you make, the easier it can become and practice definitely makes perfect!
Top Tips:

Getting to placement on time

✓ Make sure that you have the phone numbers of your placement and your college.
✓ Work out the route you will take to your placement, so that you can be sure to arrive on time.
✓ Ask your placement supervisor about what you should wear
✓ Remember to look enthusiastic and to smile!
✓ Try and find nice things to say about your placement.

My story

Jayne, nursery nurse

I remember my first placement. It was in a nursery. I was really nervous and was not sure what to do or wear. Our college sent us for an introductory visit and I found that useful because I was given things to read and was shown around. The staff were really kind to me and I tried my best to fit in. I used to make sure that I looked for things to help staff with and ways of joining in. This helped me to build my confidence and learn new skills. A few times I had to ask for advice and help because when you are new and learning, you can’t be expected to know everything. Luckily, my placement supervisor was patient and didn’t mind.

It is funny to think about my first placement because I now act as a placement supervisor and so understand what it is like for placement supervisors. I like having learners; most of them are really good and try hard although there are always a couple who turn up late or not at all. If they keep doing that, we tend to have a policy of not letting them stay on with us.
Recognising the limitations of your role

As a learner, there are limits to what you may do. You are not yet qualified so, as you saw earlier, you should never be left alone with a child or group of children. Below are other important limitations.

Talking to parents and carers

While you may greet parents and carers and it is important to be friendly, you must not let them think that you are a member of staff. If they wish to pass on or gain information, make sure that you direct them to a member of staff straightaway.

Confidentiality

Everything that you learn as a result of being on placement which is personal or not general knowledge is confidential. This means that you should not talk about children or staff members outside of the setting. You may also find that you will be asked to leave the staff room or meeting if there is confidential information to be discussed. This is normal practice, so do not be offended.

Relationships with staff members

Knowing how to act with staff members can be difficult for some learners. It is important to remember that they are not your tutors, friends or parents. This means that you cannot expect them to help you with your assignments, listen to your moans or clear up after you. Aim to be friendly and remember to be as helpful and thoughtful as possible. Remember, too, that many staff will be friends with each other and at break times may spend time chatting to each other rather than to you. This does not mean that you are not liked, but simply that they want to catch up with each other. It is therefore best if you avoid interrupting conversations.

Back to the real world

You should now feel confident and ready to go into your work placement. You should understand why it is important to be prepared in order to make a good impression.

1. Explain why it is important to make a good impression.
2. Describe four ways in which you might be able to show that you are interested in working with children.
3. Provide two examples of situations when you would need to seek advice and so refer to your placement supervisor.
Section 4

Children’s individual needs and necessity for fairness and inclusive practice

In the real world

Your tutor keeps talking about the way in which professionals working with children must meet their individual needs. You have also heard the expression anti-bias practice, but you are not sure what this means.
By the end of this section you will understand why fair and equal practice is important when working with children.
The importance of understanding children’s individual needs and your role in meeting those needs

Adults working with children should want the best for them. This means that you will have to think about each child's individual needs – that is, what each child requires in order to do well and be happy while in the setting. For example, a child who has recently joined the setting will need extra adult attention from their key worker in order to settle.

Children’s needs can vary enormously. While some needs may be long-term, others are often short-term, such as a child’s need for more adult time while settling in. Children may also have several needs, all of which must be taken into account if you are to work well with them. For example, a child with hearing loss who has difficulty settling into a setting may have a passion for toy cars, and this interest could be used to help the child settle.

Finding out about children’s needs

There are several ways in which you can find out about the individual needs of children.

Observations

By watching children you can sometimes learn more about them and their individual needs. You might spot that a child looks unhappy or worried, or that the child is having some difficulty joining in with other children. From these observations, adults should think about how best to work with the child. (You will learn more about observations in Unit 2, pages XX–XX, and Unit 6, pages XX–XX.)

Listening to children

Children can sometimes tell you what they enjoy doing and about their worries. Talking to children is an important way of working with them.

Listening to placement supervisors

When you are qualified you will gain a lot of information about children’s needs from parents. As a learner this is not appropriate, but your placement supervisor may tell you about some children’s needs, for example that a child is allergic to wheat so follows a special diet, or that a child has asthma so you should look out for signs of breathlessness. The information you are given about individual children’s needs is confidential, which means that you must not share this information with others.
Meeting children’s individual needs

It is important that children’s needs are met once they have been identified. You will probably find that your setting adapts activities or puts out specific equipment or toys to meet the needs of individual children. You will also have to think about children’s individual needs when you plan activities in a setting, and it is important to think about their interests, too. (Meeting children’s individual needs is covered in more detail in Unit 6, pages XX–XX.)

The importance of treating children with fairness and equality and how to do this

**Anti-bias practice** is used when working with children. This means that adults in the setting do everything they can to make sure that all children are treated fairly and equally. The aim is to give every child opportunities to do well.

In UK society, there have traditionally been some children and their families who have not been given the same chances as everyone else. When this happens, it is called **discrimination**. An example of discrimination is a child with a disability being unable to play in the sandpit because the sandpit is in a place that the child cannot access.

Prejudice and discrimination

Discrimination occurs when people are prejudiced. **Prejudice** comes from the idea of pre-judging someone. If you are prejudiced against a person, you already hold negative views about them before you have even met and taken time to get to know that person. (To read more about prejudice and discrimination see Unit 7, pages XX–XX.)

Equal treatment does not mean the same treatment

Treating children equally means thinking about each child as an individual and treating them with the same concern and value. As each child is unique, this means, in practical terms, that you will meet their needs differently. For example, a child who needs more attention will get more attention because he or she requires it.

Remember, treating children equally does not always mean that children receive exactly the same amount of help, time or adult attention. To treat children equally you may sometimes provide different activities or adapt equipment.
Case study

Children may have different needs

It is snack time in the nursery. Kylie and Zainep are the same age and are sitting at the table. The learner gives them both a clementine. Zainep quickly picks hers up and starts to peel it. She is pleased with herself and chats away happily. Kylie is struggling with hers. She looks frustrated but the learner refuses to help her. She says to Kylie that she must do it herself as it would not be fair on Zainep who managed to peel it by herself. She says that she must treat them the same.

1. What should the learner have done differently?
2. How might Kylie feel if she is not given some help?
3. Why might you need to treat children differently in order to treat them with equal concern?

The box below describes some ways in which you might show equal concern to children and ensure they can do as well as other children.

Tips for good practice

Ways to show equal concern

➜ Adapt activities to meet individual children’s needs.
➜ Observe and plan activities based on children’s individual interests and stage of development.
➜ Value and get to know each child.
➜ Make sure that no children or their families are ‘favourites’.
➜ Listen to children and give them attention when they need it.
➜ Think about children’s behaviour and the help they might need.

Back to the real world

You should now know some of the ways in which adults working with children try to treat children fairly and the importance of this.

1. Think of two ways in which you would need to work with children so they could be treated equally and fairly.
Section 5

Your own preferred learning style and how to develop relevant study skills

In the real world

You know that you have an assignment to do in order to complete this unit. You are a little anxious about it as this will be the first piece of work you will have done. You have also been told by your tutor that you should keep notes but are not sure how best to do this.

By the end of this section you will know how you learn best and how to study.
The different learning styles that people use and how to identify your own preferred style

People appear to process information or new bits of learning in different ways, sometimes using a combination of skills. You will need to discover how you learn and study best.

The following three headings are often used when talking about learning styles:

- **Auditory** – processing by listening, for example you enjoy being told about things
- **Kinaesthetic** – processing by doing or moving, for example you enjoy practical activities
- **Visual** – processing by watching, for example you enjoy being shown things or like to remember information by drawing

While you might recognise that you prefer to take in information using one of the learning styles above, you might also discover that you use all three types depending on the learning situation. Most people find that a practical skill such as being able to display children’s work is learned better when someone shows them (visual learning style) or encourages them to practise the skill themselves (kinaesthetic learning style). It is unlikely that anyone would be able to learn how to display children’s work from just hearing about it.

Recognising how you process information can help when it comes to revising or learning for tests. For example, if you know that you process information best through listening, you could prepare tapes for yourself; if you learn best by doing, you might physically cut up information on bits of paper and make yourself move them around the room. On the other hand, if you are good at remembering information in ‘picture’ format, you might use a mapping technique (see opposite page) or display words and diagrams in the area where you study.

Knowing yourself

To discover how you learn and study best, it is important to be honest with yourself and think about how you normally work. Some people work best in the morning, while others perform better in the evening. It is also helpful to think about the effects of pressure on you. Some people work well when under pressure and can juggle more than one assignment or task at a time, while others find that stress causes them to work more slowly or is a distraction.

Think about it

1. At what time of day do you work best?
2. Do you need to work in a quiet, calm atmosphere?
3. How easily distracted are you?
4. How do you cope with pressure?
The study skills that will help you to complete your course

By now you should have thought about how you learn best, but you will also need some study skills. On this course you will need to be able to write assignments, prepare for tests and plan activities and observations for when you are in placement. There are many skills that you will need in order to do this.

Using appropriate books for information

You will be expected to read and use books in order to complete your assignments and to find information that will help you while on placement. A good starting point when looking for books is your college or local library. Most colleges have a range of books to support learners, while most local libraries will order books for you if you know the title. In addition, your college tutors should be able to recommend books that will be right for your needs on a course.

Finding your way around a book

Indexes are useful when looking up specific pieces of information (see the index on pages XX–XX of this book), while the contents pages will show you how the book is structured (see pages XX–XX).
Practice makes perfect!
Some books are easier to read than others. If you find reading difficult, begin by reading some text that you find straightforward and then read about the same subject in a book that is more demanding. This way you will already have some idea about the subject area you are studying.

Reading and summarising information
Taking notes is a skill that comes with practice. It is vital that you do not copy out the book itself. This takes too much time and there is a danger that you might be accused of plagiarism (using someone else’s words) if you use the text you have copied in your assignment.

To avoid copying word for word, try reading a short passage at a time and then asking yourself what it means. Imagine explaining it in your own words to someone else. With the book closed, write down the information you need to remember. Some people do this with bullet points; this should help you to check that you understand the information.

Another tip is to write the title of the book and the page number in your notes. Then, if you realise later that you need more information, you will know which book to go to. This can save you a lot of time. It also means that you can include the book in the bibliography (see page XX).

If you need to quote someone’s ideas directly from a book, you should clearly show which book you are referring to (see page XX on referencing).

Taking notes in class
Taking notes can help you to remember information because you are actively doing something with it. You might like to receive handouts from tutors, but there is a danger that simply reading through the information will not help you to remember what you have learned. You will also need to take notes from books to help with your work.

People take notes in different ways. For example, you might find that the people you sit next to in class write a lot more or a lot less than you do. Some people find it helpful to write nearly everything down, while others number points or draw circles around things. It is important to make sure that you can understand your notes afterwards so that you can use them to help with your assignments or tests. Giving your notes a heading will enable you to remember afterwards what the subject was about.

Giving presentations and sharing information
As part of your course you may be asked to give a presentation or report back to the group about something you have learned or have done. Learning presentation skills will help you later on when you are looking for a job. Talking at interview is rather like giving a presentation and so practising how to talk to others is a useful skill. A good way of...
Preparing for presentations is to make some simple notes. Think about the knowledge or ideas others in the group need to hear about and then focus on the best way of sharing this information.

**Participating in group discussions**

Talking about subjects in class can be a good way of learning and absorbing information. For this to work well, everyone in the group should be ready to join in by giving their views and sharing their knowledge. Group members also need to show respect for each other by not talking over other people or laughing if a mistake is made. Groups can fail to learn if they argue or if one or two people dominate the group.

**Compiling a bibliography and using references in assignments**

**Bibliography**

To get higher grades on this course, your assignments will need to include a bibliography. This is really easy to do. You simply write a list of the books, websites or magazines that you have used to help you with the assignment. There are many ways of writing a bibliography but the essential information to include for a book is:

- title of the book
- author’s name
- publisher
- date of publication
- edition.

The same information is needed if you use other sources, such as a magazine, although for a website you should write the website address and link and give the date that you used it.

**Referencing**

As you saw earlier (page XX), you are not allowed to write someone else’s words in an assignment and pass them off as your own. This is known as plagiarism, and if you do this you will fail your assignment. You can still use words from books, magazines and other sources as long as you credit them – this is called referencing. There are two types of references: direct and indirect.

**Direct reference**

An example of a direct reference is given below. Note how it contains an actual quote from a book along with the author’s name and the date that the book was published. It is also good practice to include the page number as well. Make sure that you copy out any text accurately.

*While I observed Ayse, I noticed that she enjoyed playing with buttons. I believe she was enjoying the sensory experience. According to Tassoni, ‘Children need opportunities to explore the natural and man-made world. For babies and toddlers, this exploration can take the form of sensory play and heuristic play’ (Tassoni, 2006, p.163).*
Indirect reference

Now consider the indirect reference below. An indirect reference refers to what an author has written about rather than using his or her exact words.

Piaget’s work has been criticised by others studying children. Margaret Donaldson suggested that children found it hard to do the tasks because of the design of the experiments. She argued that this made it hard for the children to find the right answers (Donaldson, 1978).

Listing references

At the end of your assignment you will need to write out a list of the books or sources that you referenced. This is usually put under the heading ‘References’. As with writing a bibliography, you should include the author, book title, publisher and date of publication. In theory, it should be possible for your tutor to read a reference and then, from the information given, go to the book or other source and find the reference. This is why it is important that the date of the book or source is given along with a page number.

Writing different documents for assignments

You are required to complete written assignments for this course. Many learners find this daunting, so you will not be alone if you feel anxious about it. The key to coping is firstly to listen carefully to your tutor as the assignment task is given out. Most tutors will give you some ideas as to how you can structure your assignment. You can also look at similar documents; for example, if you have been asked to write a leaflet, look at some leaflets to see how they have been written.

While you will need to write, remember that this is not a writing course and so providing you have met the grading criteria, it does not matter if you are not absolutely word perfect. You may also find that the more you read, the better your writing will become.

Punctuation, spelling and grammar

Punctuation, spelling and grammar are the tools of writing and so are important. If you have difficulties with writing it is essential to ask for help and not to be embarrassed. Writing is a skill that will be needed in your career and not being able to write may hold you back later. Colleges have many ways of supporting learners who need help with writing skills and it is a good idea to seek help now while you are a learner and have more time. Help is free and confidential, which means that other learners in your group do not have to know that you are receiving it.

If you are someone who can write, but find punctuation and spelling difficult, you may like to think about learning to touch type so that you can word-process your assignments. This can be useful as the computer can pick up mistakes and help you to correct them.

Did you know?

To achieve a C grade or above for the Unit 1 assignment, you must include references and a bibliography.
Time management

Being able to complete an assignment or prepare for an exam requires good time management skills. Some capable learners may find that they do not fulfil their potential because their time management skills are weak.

Planning your time

It is important at the start of any assignment or task to be aware of how much of your time it will take. You may know, for example, that you find reading a little difficult or are someone who has to put ideas down in draft before writing out an assignment. This means that when you are given an assignment, you should work out how much time each part is likely to take you. It is important to be realistic when you do this and to allow for any problems, such as difficulties printing out your work or getting hold of books that you need. It is also worth considering that you might be unwell during this period or that something unexpected may happen. This is why it is usually best to do some work straightaway.

The example below shows how a task can be divided into steps and how you might start to consider the possible difficulties in a task.

**Example assignment**

Sara and her group have been asked to carry out an observation on a child in placement. They have been told to ask permission from their placement supervisor and then choose one child and look at that child's fine motor skills. Once they have completed the observation, they must then consider how they will use books to work out how the child's skills compares to the normative development. Both the observation and their evaluation of the child's physical skills must be presented in writing. The tutor is expecting around three pages of writing.

The task in the example above can be divided into five different steps.

1. Asking the placement supervisor for permission to observe a child
2. Observing the child
3. Writing up the observation
4. Researching normative development
5. Writing up an evaluation

**Possible problems might include:**

1. The placement supervisor may not be available.
2. It may not be possible to observe the chosen child.
3. There may not be any books available to research normative development.

**Possible difficulty with skills could include:**

1. Sara’s observation skills may need practising.
2. She may find it hard to find the words she needs when writing up the observation.
3. She may find taking notes and choosing the relevant points about normative development difficult.
4. She may find it hard to put her thoughts into words.
5. She may have difficulties with handwriting/typing and/or spelling and punctuation.
Revising for tests

Some learners find tests difficult, while others prefer them to assignments. Learners who do well with tests and exams tend to be ‘active’ revisers. This means that they do not simply pick up a book or their notes and read them but do a variety of things that actively engage their brain when revising. The spider diagram below shows some useful strategies for revising.

Back to the real world

You should now have thought about how you learn. You should also have tried out some different study skills.

1. Explain your preferred learning style. Describe what this means in practice.
2. How should you use a reference in a text?

Getting ready for assessment

Unit 1 is assessed through an introductory task that has been written by the awarding body. If you have worked through all the activities in the ‘Back to the real world’ features in this unit, you will be ready to successfully complete your assessment.