

READY TO LEARN before I am born

Six Steps to Success

Bonding with your baby during pregnancy is a powerful and nurturing experience for you both. Simple interactions throughout the day can positively influence your baby's brain development whilst helping you to foster love and attachment before birth.



I can hear you

A baby in the womb can start to hear you from 18 weeks. It is never too soon to start talking!

Talking to your baby before they are born is simple.

- Speak naturally: just talk about your day, your feelings or your plans.
- Use a soothing voice: a calm and loving voice can help your baby to feel safe and content.
- Encourage your partner and others to talk to baby too.



I can listen to songs and rhymes

Singing to your baby before they are born is a wonderful way to bond, soothe and help them to recognise your voice.

- Pick lullabies, soft songs or even hymns and cultural songs that are important to you.
- Try singing at consistent times during the day- before bed or after meal time.

Scan the QR code for lots more singing ideas.



I can feel you

Responding to your baby's movements is the very start of having a conversation with your baby before they are born.

- When your baby kicks or moves around, gently touch the bump or talk to them in response. This can help baby to recognise your voice and touch.
- Being aware of your baby's movements is important to track healthy development.

Scan the QR code for Count the Kicks.



I like stories

Children with good language skills are successful in life!

Reading to your baby before they are born is the best way to support early language development.

- Read aloud daily: even just 5-10 minutes a day is beneficial.
- Choose short stories, poems or children's books with soothing rhythms and rhymes.
- Join your local library to explore a huge range of books.

Scan the QR code for books to share with bump.



I can bond with others

Set time each day for your partner or other important person to bond with baby before birth. This can help them to feel connected and involved from the very beginning.

- Gentle touch and massage: encourage them to place their hands on the bump and talk to baby as they do so.
- Attend pre-natal appointments together to share hearing baby's heartbeat and seeing the ultrasound images.

Scan the QR code for more bonding tips.



I can grow when you are healthy

Boosting your baby's brain and overall development before they are born starts with a mix of nutrition, healthy habits and emotional care.

- Try to eat a range of nutrients, including folic acid.
- Manage stress with relaxation techniques such as prenatal yoga, deep breathing or meditation.
- Get good sleep and take moderate and safe exercise.

Scan the QR code for Sefton services, including how to claim for the Healthy Start Scheme.



All babies grow and develop in the womb at different rates, and every pregnancy is different. If you are worried, trust your instincts and reach out to your G.P. or midwife for support.

READY TO LEARN when I am a newborn



Six Steps to Success

Welcoming a new baby is a joyful, yet overwhelming time.

You don't need to have everything perfect; your love, attention and nurturing care is what matters most.

Here's what your newborn baby truly needs in the early days and weeks to get the best start in life.

I can communicate

Your newborn baby will cry to communicate their needs, discomfort or distress.

- Try to respond to your baby when they cry as this lets them know that they are safe and their needs will be met.
- It is normal to feel overwhelmed when trying to comfort a baby who has been crying for a long time. It's okay to walk away if you have checked that baby is safe.

Scan the QR code for support with crying babies.



I can listen and respond

From birth, your baby is learning how to communicate. Even though they can't talk yet, they are already listening, watching and starting to respond in their own way.

- Your voice and facial expressions are powerful. Talking, cooing, and smiling helps your baby feel seen and loved.
- Talk, sing and read to your baby. This early language will help to build their vocabulary and lay strong foundations for the future.
- Answer your baby's coos and gurgles with your own sounds and words, creating back and forth interactions.

Scan the QR code to join baby rhyme time sessions in Sefton.



I can sleep safely

Sleep is essential for your baby's growth, brain development, and overall health.

- Always place your baby on their back to sleep, in a cot or Moses basket with a firm, flat mattress.
- Keep the sleep space clear of pillows, duvets or toys.
- Avoid your baby getting too hot.
- The safest place for baby to sleep for the first 6 months is in the same room as you, even during naps.

Scan the QR code to support good sleep routines.



I feel safe and loved

From the moment your baby is born, they begin to form emotional connections. Feeling safe and loved isn't just comforting - it's essential to your baby's healthy development.

- Cuddle and hold your baby often. Skin to skin contact and gentle touch will help you both to feel connected.
- Create a calm place. A peaceful space with soft lighting, soothing sounds and gentle care helps your baby feel protected.
- Be consistent. Routines and consistent caregiving help babies understand what to expect, building trust and security.

I can explore

Even from birth, your baby is learning. Newborn babies experience the world through their senses- sight, sound, touch, smell and movement.

- You don't need lots of toys. Your baby's favourite 'toys' are your face and voice.
- Play music, sing songs, and introduce baby to sounds such as taking them outside to hear the birds singing.
- Whilst it can be tiring for newborns, very short tummy time sessions encourage head lifting and strengthening of the neck and back muscles.

Scan the QR code for top tips for tummy time tips.



I am healthy

Your baby's first weeks are full of new experiences. Knowing what's normal and when to get help will give you confidence and peace of mind.

- Attend all midwife, health visitor and GP check-ups.
- Keep track of immunisations.
- Watch for signs of illness such as fever, unusual crying or feeding difficulties.
- Never be afraid to ask for help if you are worried something is wrong.

Scan the QR code for more information.



All babies grow and develop at different rates.

Trust your instincts and ask for support when you need it by talking to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

READY TO LEARN when I am a baby

Six Steps to Success

Babies are curious, capable and eager to explore the world around them.

The first year is one of rapid brain development- what your baby sees, hears and feels helps shape how they grow, think and build strong relationships with others.



Check out Sefton's '50 things to do before you are 1'



I can communicate my wants and needs

By 12 months, your baby should babble and start to say one or two recognisable words such as 'mama'.

- Talk to your baby often- even before they can talk back. Take turns in conversations' where you talk and they babble back to you.
- Describe what you're doing, name objects and respond to their sounds and gestures.
- Listening and responding builds language skills and supports a strong emotional connection.

Scan the QR code for more suggestions.



I can listen and respond

By 12 months, your baby should respond to their name and understand simple words like "bye - bye", "milk" or "ball".

- Read together everyday, even though your baby may only listen for a few minutes. This is one of the best things that you can do for your baby's development.
- Choose colourful picture books and use your voice to bring stories to life.
- Have a go at using some simple 'signs' for key things, such as 'milk'. This will help your baby to develop their understanding of words and is so much fun to learn together.

Scan the QR code to learn about signing with baby.



I can sing and play

'If a child knows eight nursery rhymes by the time they're four years old, they're usually among the best readers by the time they're eight.'

Songs and rhymes are a simple, joyful way to help your baby learn every day.

- Sing nursery rhymes, clap hands and play simple games like peek-a-boo.
- Play music and lullabies to develop memory, coordination and social interaction.

Scan the QR Code for more singing ideas.



I feel safe and loved

You don't need special words or lessons, just your voice and affection. Every chat, cuddle and shared moment helps your baby to grow and learn.

- Show affection through cuddles, eye contact and soothing voices.
- Enjoy some quiet time together every day, holding baby close and rocking them gently.
- Don't worry about 'spoiling' a baby - a consistent response helps build trust and secure attachment.

I can explore

Exploring and playing may look like fun- and it is! But for babies it's also how they learn. Every touch, sound and movement helps their brain and body grow.

- Provide soft toys.
- Encourage baby to move, crawl, reach and touch. Try to avoid restrictive equipment such as baby seats or walkers.
- Create your own treasure basket with household objects to explore together.

Scan the QR code to make your own treasure basket using a range of household items.



I can learn at every opportunity

Everyday routines are powerful moments for babies. Through these simple, repeated activities, babies begin to understand their world, feel secure and build important skills.

- Meal times are great for naming foods and practicing routines.
 - Bath times can include songs, bubbles and naming body parts.
 - Going out and about in the pram gives the opportunity to see, hear and talk about the world.
- Talk to baby during nappy changes to build awareness of bodily functions... this is the very first stage of toilet training!

Scan the QR code for further advice.



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Trust your instincts and ask for support when you need it by talking to your midwife, health visitor or GP.

READY TO LEARN when I am 1



Six Steps to Success

Your child's development between the ages of 1 and 2 years is incredible as the brain forms over 1 million cells every second! Every day brings new skills, discoveries and opportunities to learn together.

Check out Sefton's '50 things to do before you are 2'

I can communicate my wants and needs

By the age of 2, your child should be able to say 50 words and will start to put short sentences together, such as 'more milk.'

You can support their growing communication in simple, powerful ways.

Talk all the time:

- Describe what you are doing, "now we're putting on your socks."
- Talk about what your baby is looking at or playing with.
- Use simple, clear words and repeat them often.

Scan the QR code for more information.



I am aware of my own feelings

Your baby is starting to feel a wide range of emotions. They don't have the words to explain how they feel but you can help them to start to understand.

- Name the emotions for them in simple terms, for e.g. "you're feeling sad" or "you're happy."
- Show a happy face when talking about happiness and a sad face when talking about sadness.
- When your baby cries or gets frustrated respond calmly "i see you are upset, it's okay."

I can listen

Helping your 1 year old to listen is about building their attention in a gentle and understanding way.

- Make eye contact by kneeling or sitting down so that you are face to face.
- Say your child's name before giving an instruction to get their attention.
- Reduce background noise like the TV when you want your baby to listen.
- Babies under the age of 2 years should not use screens.

Scan the QR code to understand screen time.



I can follow simple instructions

By the age of 2, your child should understand more than 200 words.

Encouraging your child to follow simple instructions will support this.

- Keep instructions short and clear, for e.g. "sit down."
- Point, gesture or demonstrate what you mean, for e.g. say "clap your hands" whilst clapping.
- Pause after every instruction- your baby may need a few seconds to process what you have said.
- Praise your baby when they do what you ask.

I can play

Your baby is becoming more curious, mobile and eager to copy what you do. Your baby learns even more if you play with them!

- Let your baby choose what interests them.
- Toys for this age include stacking blocks, soft balls and picture books.
- Your baby learns by doing the same thing over and over again.
- Simple games like peek-a-boo or hiding toys helps to develop memory and social skills.

Scan the QR code for more tips.



I am independent

At this age, toddlers start exploring the world and want to do things in their own way, even if they still need a lot of support.

- Offer two easy options so that your child can choose, for e.g. "red cup or blue cup?"
- Let them try feeding themselves with finger foods or child safe utensils.
- Celebrate their efforts to do things alone, even if they don't always get it perfect.
- Introduce a potty chair or seat and encourage your child to sit on it. Start healthy habits by showing your child how to wash their hands after having their nappy changed.

Scan the QR code for more suggestions.



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Trust your instincts and ask for support when you need it by talking to your health visitor, GP, nursery or childminder.

READY TO LEARN when I am 2

Six Steps to Success

At two years old, your child will develop rapidly with their physical skills, language development and their emerging independence. They are still learning how to walk, talk and explore the world, and require constant supervision and care.



Check out Sefton's '50 things to do before you are 3'

I can communicate my wants and needs

By age 3, your child should know between 500 - 900 words and put 4 or 5 words together to make a sentence, "I want more milk."

The more words they hear through conversation, the more they will learn - their brains are like a sponge!

- Read together daily, talking about the pictures and naming objects.
- Engage in conversation, even if your child's responses are limited.
- Play games that involve naming objects, animals or body parts to expand their vocabulary even further.



I can follow simple instructions

By age 3, your child should understand at least 300 words and be able to follow simple, one-step directions, especially when involving familiar objects and routines: "Give me your cup."

- Get your child's attention first by kneeling to their level and saying their name calmly. Pause until they make eye contact before speaking.
- Keep instructions simple and precise, using one instruction at a time to begin with, "Build a tower."
- Use gestures to show what you mean by pointing to the bricks.
- Offer choice when possible to encourage co-operation, e.g. "Do you want the red socks or the blue socks?"



I am beginning to be aware of my own feelings

Your child will develop more independence and may show defiant behaviour when they feel frustrated or angry. This is out of your child's control and they should not be punished.

- Help your child to learn that all emotions are normal, even though they may feel uncomfortable.
- Name your child's emotion for them, for e.g. "you're really angry because your sock won't go on".
- Set clear and consistent boundaries to keep your child safe, for e.g. "holding hands" near the road.

Scan the QR code for more suggestions.



I can play with other children

Sharing and playing with other children is really hard at this age. Your child's brain, emotions and sense of self are developing. There will be conflict and your child needs lots of time to practice being with others, just like when they learn how to walk.

- Model sharing, for e.g. "I'm sharing my snack with you. That feels kind."
- Use short, clear phrases such as "your turn, then Jaimie's turn."
- Praise efforts, not perfection, for e.g. "you gave her the block, good sharing."



I can listen and join in

Your child will begin to enjoy simple interactions with others, especially when this is interesting and interactive.

- Read short picture books with interaction: pause after a page, ask "Where's the bear?" and give time for them to answer.
- Play turn-taking games like rolling a ball. You roll - pause - then say "Your turn!" This encourages listening and anticipating the next step.
- Use specific praise to encourage focus, "You waited for a turn - great listening!"



I am becoming more independent

Your child will begin to manage basic self-care tasks with growing confidence.

- Create a 'toddler' environment so that your child is able to succeed with small tasks, for e.g. provide a step stool for hand washing.
- Encourage your child to use the potty or toilet and remove nappies during the day. Your child will have accidents - this is how they learn! Simply clean away with no fuss and be patient.
- Allow time for your child to complete tasks independently, even if it means a slower pace.
- While it's important to set some boundaries, allow your child the freedom to make mistakes which are vital for learning and growth.

Scan the QR code for toilet training advice.



All children grow and develop at different rates.

Trust your instincts and ask for support when you need it by talking to your health visitor, GP, nursery or childminder.

READY TO LEARN when I am 3



Six Steps to Success

The age of three is a truly magical time in your child's development. Their imagination is vivid, their language skills are expanding and their ability to form friendships is blossoming.

At this stage, learning happens naturally- through play, movement, discovery and interaction with others.

It's a time of wonder, creativity and joyful discovery, laying the groundwork for a lifetime of learning.

Check out Sefton's '50 things to do before you are 4'

I can communicate my wants and needs

By age 4, your child should be able to have conversations with people when interested, and link 2 sentences together by using the words 'and', "I went to the park and i had an ice cream".

- Model and expand your child's language, for e.g. if your child says "milk, toast," you can respond "Yes- you want some milk and toast please".
- Slow down and listen. Give them time (5 -8 seconds) to process and reply. Resist finishing sentences for them.
- Describe real events by narrating daily routines or their plan: "you were cold and so you asked for your jacket." This helps them link feelings to words.



I can follow simple instructions

By age 4, your child should be able to understand and carry out two - to - three step verbal instructions.

- Speak slowly with minimal words, "Put on your coat and then get your shoes and bag".
- Use "first X, then Y" which helps with comprehending order, "first toilet, then wash hands."
- Ask them to repeat back, "what do i want you to do?" to confirm understanding.
- Ask for their thoughts, "what do you think"?



I am aware of my own feelings and I am kind towards others

Your child will be more aware of their own emotions and begin to show genuine concern or kindness towards others.

- Name and reflect feelings for them to build emotional vocabulary, "It looks like you're sad because the picture tore".
- Model calming strategies, by showing them deep breaths or offering a hug. "When I feel angry, I take five breaths and think of something I like."
- Give positive feedback, "I noticed how you gave your friend her teddy- that was kind."



I can play with other children & share toys with them

Your child will show more awareness of their peers and will begin to play side - by - side with them as they use the same or similar toys.

- Create inviting spaces for play and make sure there are enough toys so that children can play together.
- Gently guide rather than forcing "It's okay if you really want to keep them. You showed kindness by holding Jasmynes hand while she had her doll."
- Provide shared pretend themes, through dramatic play, "I'll be the doctor- now i need a patient" which encourages negotiation and consideration of others.



I can listen & join in with an activity

Your child will be developing stronger listening skills and will be more eager to join in with social interactions and play.

- Engage in interactive play which encourages listening and responding, such as "Simon Says" or simple board games.
- Provide opportunities for group play by arranging play dates or attending group sessions.
- Model positive social behaviours such as sharing and turn-taking with polite language "please" and "thank you."



I can go to the toilet by myself and I have good self-care skills

Your child should be able to attend to more of their own self-care needs, including using the toilet by the time they are 4 years old.

- Use elastic waist bottoms and velcro shoes to foster success with toileting.
- Use a child friendly seat for the toilet so that your child's feet touch the floor- this helps your child to feel in control.
- Offer gentle prompts "let's try sitting on the toilet now please."
- Create visual tooth brushing steps, e.g. "brush top teeth" - "brush bottom teeth" - "rinse." (brushing until age 6 still needs an adult to finish-off to prevent enamel).



All children grow and develop at different rates.

Trust your instincts and ask for support when you need it by talking to your health visitor, GP, nursery or childminder.

READY TO LEARN when I start Reception

Six Steps to Success

Starting school is such an important and exciting milestone in your child's life. Your child doesn't need to know how to read or write (yet!), it is much more important that they have the skills shared below to make sure that they are 'ready to learn'.

This will help your child to settle into routines quickly, build friendships and make good progress with their learning and development.



Check out Sefton's '50 things to do before you are 5'

I can communicate my wants and needs

Your child should be able to speak in longer conversations and respond appropriately when others talk to them, listening and waiting their turn.

- Encourage your child to speak in short sentences and model this for them.
- Hold back and forth conversations throughout the day giving your whole attention to your child.
- Read every single day, talking about the books together.

Scan the QR code for more talking tips.



I can follow simple instructions

Your child should be able to listen and maintain attention for about 10 - 15 minutes. This is how they will learn and thrive when they start school.

- Ask simple requests, for e.g. 'put toys away please'.
- Play simple games together.
- Make it clear that your child must follow the instruction of an adult, and give them help to achieve this if necessary.

Scan the QR code for fun ways to develop attention.



I am aware of my own feelings and I am kind towards others

Children need to learn that all feelings are a normal part of life, and although it isn't nice to feel sad or angry, they can hold this emotion and learn how to cope with it.

- Label emotions for your child as they are experienced, for e.g. "I can see that you are sad because you are crying, let me give you a hug to help you feel better."
- Support your child to calm down (regulate) through ways which work for them, this could be by taking some deep breaths, or gently taking your child away from a difficult situation.

Scan the QR code for more information.



I can play with other children & share toys with them

At school, your child will need to share a learning space with up to 30 other children and being able to wait patiently for a turn is an essential skill they need to learn.

- Play simple turn taking games, using the phrase "my turn" and "your turn."
- Acknowledge that waiting is hard but resist offering distractions, such as a tablet or phone which removes the need to wait.

Scan the QR code for games to play together.



I can listen & join in with an activity

In order to learn and and enjoy school, children need to be able to listen and respond appropriately. Having lots of back and forth conversations helps to develop this skill.

- Talk to your child about anything and everything as you go about your day, such as what you are buying in the shops or what you can see through the car window.
- Gain your child's attention by saying their name and waiting for them to acknowledge you before talking to them and pausing to give them enough time to respond.
- Limit screen time to the recommended daily amounts.



I can go to the toilet by myself and I have good self-care skills

Your child should be able to use the toilet by themselves independently, and know how to ask for help if needed.

- Expect independence with toileting, including how to wipe themselves clean and wash their hands.
- Allow your child time to carry out independent tasks such as getting dressed. It may take longer in the short term, but your child will feel the inner motivation that they succeeded and are more likely to try.
- Encourage your child to brush their teeth independently whilst finishing-off for them.



All children grow and develop at different rates.

Trust your instincts and ask for support when you need it by talking to your health visitor, GP, nursery, childminder or school.