**In The Moment Planning and Child Initiated Play for the EYFS**

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**What is In The Moment Planning and Child-Initiated Play for the EYFS?**

You may have heard the term**‘in the moment planning’**. Although a relatively simple idea, some find‘in the moment planning’ challenging in practise. This is probably because there isn’t any forward ‘planning’ or focus activities involved. So, to make it clearer we have created a simple guide to ‘in the moment planning for eyfs’…

The idea is to capture the interest of a child or children in the present moment.

Young children have a natural desire to learn, explore and question. Settings should offer an environment that enables child-initiated play in order to capture the moment of engagement. Careful observation by practitioners is key to utilising the approach. Opportunities to seize the moment when a child shows interest in an activity which can be built upon needs to be recognised, these are normally called **‘teachable moments**’. Written ‘planning’ is then carried out in the form of observations, records of the interactions and notes on the outcomes.

We have put together a template this template to make recording child-led play easy and in a way Ofsted, parents and fellow practitioners will love, [find more information and view a sample here.](https://www.nurseryresources.org/product/in-the-moment-planning-sheets?utm_source=Itmp_article&utm_medium=_In_The_Moment_Planning_webpage&utm_campaign=Aug_2018)

**This fits in very nicely with the Early Years Framework:**

“1.6. Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests, and stage of development of each child in their care. They must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience for each child, across all areas of learning and development.”

**Teachable Moments During Child-Led Play**

Teachable moments are about recognising that children learn in an unconscious way during informal interactions. It can be difficult to provide for, recognise and take advantage of individual **teachable moments** when it comes to **in the moment planning** as you are looking for opportunities to allow learning to take place through child-initiated play.

**We’ve put together a few tips to help you:**

* Provide opportunities and environments that stimulate curiosity (each child will have different things that stimulate them – while one might enjoy painting, another might like dressing up).
* Observe and listen closely so you can follow the child’s lead
* Identify the item/place/person/idea that has sparked the child’s interest
* Use open-ended questions that require a description, rather than a yes or no answer – these usually start with what/how/why rather than do/is/can. (‘What do you like about that?’ rather than ‘Do you like that?’)
* Praise and reinforce positive learning experiences

A good example of child-led play might be that there are areas in the setting for a number of different activities and varied items of interest. Children are given the opportunity to choose what or where they would like to play, rather than being directed to an activity by a practitioner. When the practitioner engages with the child, they approach the child to enquire about the activity, rather than calling the child over to them. The practitioner is then curious and enthusiastic about what the child is doing, which leads to a moment where child-led learning can take place.

For example, if a child is playing with a ball and they are asked what they like about it, they might reply ‘it’s round’. This can be used to engage the child and create curiosity and conversation about other shapes.

**Planning for and Recording ‘In the Moment Planning’**

One of the greatest hesitations practitioners have about in the moment planning is the question of exactly what and how to plan, in addition to how to reflect on what the children have achieved in a formalised way. It doesn’t help that the phrase includes the word ‘planning’ as in actual fact, there is very little structured planning involved, you cannot plan for a particular format to the play or learning if it is truly child-led.

It’s not necessary to prepare daily or weekly plans in advance to lead the session. The planning effort needed is to prepare an engaging environment with materials that will excite and interest the children, rather than detailing focus activities. Then it is important to [showcase the child-led learning](https://www.nurseryresources.org/product/in-the-moment-planning-sheets?utm_source=Itmp_article&utm_medium=_In_The_Moment_Planning_webpage&utm_campaign=Aug_2018) that has taken place to show how learning was further extended in the moment.

**Don’t think ‘planning’, think ‘enhancing’.**

If you’d like to create your own in the moment planning booklet;

* Create a sheet or booklet for each child and retrospectively record accomplishments for each session. Record both practitioner/child interactions and child/child interactions
* Remember that photographs (within guidelines) can be a useful addition to these progress records
* Reflect with the children, examine what they have done/learned/found interesting during that session and put this into your records
* Highlight areas of progress within the observation records
* List EYFS learning outcomes for each child and tick off/make notes about any progress on a weekly basis, referring back to your original observation records

Remember,**in the moment planning**and **child-initiated play** can be a fun and relaxed way for children to learn and progress in an Early Years setting. Most settings using this approach find that both the children and the practitioners are more enthusiastic, more engaged, more relaxed, and forge better relationships.

As a practitioner, the observation necessary to recognise teachable moments within child-led play will improve with practise. Reflecting on sessions, and records of the children’s observations and progress will help you identify opportunities to enhance the environment and feed into teachable moments. It may also aid understanding towards how moments initiated by the children themselves might have been progressed.

[In The Moment Planning and Child Initiated Play for the EYFS : Nursery Resources | Blog](https://www.nurseryresources.org/articles/learning-journey/in-the-moment-planning/)

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