**A Quick Guide to In the Moment Planning**



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The structure that comes with clearly planned out lessons and activity is comforting to many. But, chaotic as it might sound, 'In the moment planning’ (ITMP) comes with its own merits and is slowly making its way back to early years settings.

What is 'In the Moment Planning'?

In the moment planning is an approach where early years settings plan a topic spontaneously based on what a child is interested in.  Although it could be quite a shock for most of the modern settings who are used to the structure of pre-planned activities and lesson schedules, this child-led model is now gaining popularity among many early years educators. The system is all about completing the planning cycle in the actual moment instead of planning in advance.

Moreover, as Ofsted no longer stipulates providers to follow a specific teaching pattern, early years providers now have the discretion to create a balance between adult and child-led play and adapt the system effectively to suit their setting.

Now, what are the important areas to focus on when implementing ITMP?

**Environment**

If you are planning to try out ITMP at your setting, It's essential to create an environment that stimulates curiosity and enables each child to engage in activities without being directed by an adult. Depending on the age range and requirements of the children in each room, make sure each activity area is equipped with all necessary provision that allows them to learn or practice a new skill. Make sure you get rid of clutter and display toys, books and resources on low shelves that are easily visible and accessible to the children.

**Observation**

Allow children to choose what they would like to play with. Rather than stepping in to direct them towards an activity, make sure you observe the child closely and follow their lead.  And, when you do step in, make sure you display curiosity and enthusiasm in what they are doing and engage them with open-ended questions, steering them away from the yes or no answers. ('Why do you like the yellow digger?' instead of 'Do you like the digger?’)

**Planning 'Next Steps'**

Although the [EYFS](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-handbook) framework requires practitioners to demonstrate the planning cycle, it does not stipulate the time frame in which to complete the cycle. In the Moment Panning often allows you to complete the planning cycle in the moment, taking away the need for long term plans to complete the 'next steps.'

In many cases, the step of spotting a 'teachable moment' would be immediately followed by engaging with the child and gently taking their learning to the next step - thereby completing the planning cycle in that very session. However, what needs to be remembered is, your staff members should be aware of when to step in and get involved in the play and when to stand back and take the stance of an observer.

**Recording Observations**

As simple and straightforward as it is to execute ITMP, most practitioners shy away from the approach because of the uncertainties on how to document and record the observations and learning outcomes formally. However, as Early Years Practitioner, [Ian Houghton](https://www.earlyyearsstaffroom.com/in-the-moment-planning/) points out, if your staff have the skill and confidence to articulate what they are doing to inspectors and back their reflections with evidences, this is an approach you can embed effectively in your setting.

Nurseryresources also has some useful templates to record the observations in an easy-to-capture format. You can use the template for each child and record the outcomes of each session 'retrospectively'.

Here is a quick look at the information you can include in your ITMP observation sheets:

* Observation
* How learning was extended (questions asked)
* Next steps
* The area in which the activity of the observation took place
* Tick box for 'characteristics of effective learning covered’
* Tick box for 'areas of learning covered’

Once you have created your ITMP templates, you can focus on one child each term for child-led play sessions, or use it to observe 4-5 children each day – creating written observation at least once each week. However, what is crucial is to make sure you follow a pattern that works out practically for you and your setting.

When used effectively, in the moment planning can act as a great tool to focus on each child’s individual interests each week/each fortnight and creates a fun and relaxed way which allows each child to make progress in areas that are relevant and of interest to them.

[A Quick Guide to In the Moment Planning | Child Initiated play (cheqdin.com)](https://cheqdin.com/in-the-moment-planning)

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