

Group times in an early childhood setting can provide valuable opportunities for learning and fun. However, they may also present some challenges for staff.

When planning and implementing group times with children, early years staff may like to consider these themes:

- 1. What are the goals for group time?** This could include reflections on the whole group and individual children.
- 2. How could these goals be incorporated into other parts of the day?** It may be beneficial to provide alternative small group or individual opportunities throughout the day to support these goals.



- 3. How can the transition to group time be supported?** Early Years staff can plan to support the transition to group time through: environmental design, e.g. a mat on the floor; visuals e.g. holding the book to show children what is being read; and a strong routine e.g. a transition bell.
- 4. How long is the group session?** Consider the developmental skills of the group as a whole and individuals within the group when determining the time frame for the session.
- 5. How can early years educators support diversity within group sessions?** Supports can include offering flexible seating options for children, and alternative ways for them to participate. Some children may also benefit from holding an object, while others may find eye contact difficult to maintain. Large group sessions may also feel overwhelming to some children due to noise or the proximity to other children. *There is no 'right' way to listen and learn.*

6. **How can early years educators support children to know what is expected?** A carpet square may indicate where to sit, and visuals, e.g. a visual schedule, can support children to know what is going to happen during the session. Adults may find it beneficial to reflect on ways to reduce possible distractions within the room.
7. **How can early years educators support a child's interests within the group time routine?** Children may be more motivated to engage when the book or song reflects their interests, for example, counting, dinosaurs or unicorns.



8. **How can choice be used to support the transition to group time?** Providing children with a choice, for example, 'would you like to sit beside x or y?', or 'do you want to sit here or here?' may help them transition more easily into the group and gives the child the opportunity to communicate their preferences.

**References:**

Australian Government Department of Education. (2022). Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia (V2.0). <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/EYLF-2022-V2.0.pdf>