



Tip Sheet

Supporting Group Times



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

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

What are the group time goals?

This could include reflections on the whole group or individual children. Being clear on your purpose can make planning for inclusive group times much more effective.



Can goals be incorporated elsewhere?

What opportunities for small group or individual learning are available throughout other parts of the day to support these goals? (E.g. a child may not be ready to engage in a group literacy experience, but can meaningfully participate in a playful reading of a favourite book in a small group.)



How can the transition to group time be supported?

Early childhood staff can plan to support the transition to group time through *environmental design* (e.g. mat on the floor); *visuals* (e.g. holding the book to show children what is being read); and *strong routine* (e.g. a transition bell).

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How can diversity be supported during group sessions?

Supports can include offering flexible seating options for children and alternate ways for them to participate. Some children may also benefit from holding an object, while others may engage best when not expected to maintain eye contact. Large group session may also feel overwhelming to some children due to noise or proximity to others.

There is no 'right' way to listen and learn.

How long is the group session?

Consider the developmental skills of the group as a whole and individuals of the group when determining the time frame for group sessions.



How can children be supported to know what is expected?

A carpet square may indicate where to sit, and visuals (e.g. visual schedules) can support children to know what is going to happen during a session. Educators may find it beneficial to reflect on ways to reduce possible distractions within the environment.

How can a child's interests and needs be supported?

Children may engage more when the book or song reflects their interests (e.g. counting, dinosaurs, unicorns etc).

Children's need for movement may be supported by incorporating action songs alongside story time.



References

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



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