

Supporting children's thinking and learning

Most children tend to develop skills for thinking and learning in predictable sequence. Often children's learning and development occurs in bursts, with new skills appearing almost overnight. However, it is important to remember that each child develops at a different rate and that individual differences are common. Differences may be due to children's inherited tendencies, the experiences and opportunities they are exposed to, or a combination of both. Parents, carers and teachers can promote children's cognitive development by 'scaffolding' children's thinking. Scaffolding involves supporting children as they attempt tasks that stretch their abilities just beyond what they can already do for themselves. Children can generally do more difficult things with an adult than they can on their own. As children's abilities develop, they gradually become more independent in their learning and the scaffolds placed around learning this particular skill can therefore be reduced.

Other ways to support children's cognitive development:

- Break difficult tasks into smaller steps
- Encourage persistence
- Watch for signs of frustration
- Give prompts and ask questions
- Praise your child for attempting the task, not just for succeeding
- Watch for signs of struggling or frustration as these may be signs that the task is too difficult.

If you are concerned about your child's development talk to your child's classroom teacher, the school counsellor, and/or contact your family doctor to be referred for an assessment by a paediatrician.

Information sourced from <https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/about-thinking-and-learning>

