

A guide to...

EYFS resourcing

Covering all seven areas of learning in the EYFS, **Nicole Weinstein** and sector experts highlight natural and bought resources to encourage risk-taking and provide challenge

Risk and challenge threads through every area of learning and development. There's no quick-fix solution to providing it: 'designated areas for risk' in a nursery would be as far off the point as a tick-box spreadsheet with the outcome 'attempted a risky activity today'.

Risk is relative to each individual and it cannot be easily defined. Therefore practitioners must be attuned to what a child might perceive as risky. For example, coming to a setting for the first time is a risky situation for a toddler – and meeting a new creature such as a guinea pig can feel very risky, even for a confident four-year-old.

Gaynor Rice, early childhood lecturer and co-author of *We're OK with Risky Play!*, says, 'The biggest support comes from a sensitive adult who understands what risk is,

makes consideration for the age of the child and is able to support and facilitate them to address and overcome that risk. Practitioners can then choose whatever resources are at hand. It could be during a cooking activity, at story time, while dressing up or when painting.'

EFFECTIVE RESOURCING

It is important to consider how to resource the environment in terms of risk and challenge for deeper learning. In the context of the Characteristics of Effective Learning, where children must be supported to 'have a go', deal with set-backs, develop concentration and perseverance, and enjoy their achievements, the cost of resources can be a major consideration.

Anne Gladstone, the other co-author of *We're OK with Risky Play!*, suggests practitioners can offer existing resources to be used in

How to manage risk – tips

- Be confident about managing risk effectively.
- Carefully risk-assess through the planning process long before children become involved.
- Manage the environment carefully but subtly so children can take risks, while at the same time being protected from hazardous situations.

→ More information:

We're OK with Risky Play! by Anne Gladstone and Gaynor Rice (Lawrence Educational), www.lawrenceeducational.co.uk

slightly different ways. 'Scissors, staplers, hole-punches, pens and pencils are everyday items for adults but are attractive and sophisticated tools for children,' she says.

Another consideration is to buy real objects such as cooking utensils and gardening equipment. 'It is far more beneficial to learn how to manage risk with real items that children will eventually use as adults,' Ms Gladstone advises.

COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

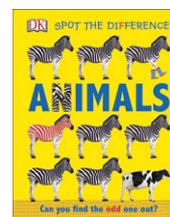
Expert opinion: Education consultant, author and trainer **Penny Tassoni** believes a good starting point when looking at what resources to choose is to consider the purpose.

'Communication and language covers many skills from helping children take turns through to learning new meanings of words,' she says. 'In some cases, we may also want to look out for resources that stimulate questions, comments and enthuse children so that communication and language abounds. This might mean buying in

resources such as hatching butterflies, or buying some cooking or gardening equipment.

'Alongside thinking carefully about the purpose, it is also important to think about the stage of development. A turn-taking game such as ELC's Puff The Pop Up Dragon may prove to be a success with a small group of four-year-olds, but will not be suitable for two-year-olds.

'Resources also need to be chosen with adult and child enjoyment in mind. Take books. In theory, books can be great for increasing vocabulary and also stimulating conversations, but not when adults or children dislike a book!



Above: *Animals*, £4.99, www.dk.com
Inset: *Cosy's radios*
Below: *Sound Bank Plus* by Yellow Door



'Finally, we should never forget that adults' interactions will always be the most powerful resource.'

RESOURCES

- Sound Bank Plus, £12, www.yellow-door.net
- Puff The Pop Up Dragon, £10, www.elc.co.uk
- Outdoor Big Point Recordable Buttons, £71.95, www.tts-group.co.uk
- Two Way Radios, £24.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Small-scale loose parts such as stones, pine cones, pebbles, shells, leaves and twigs. Try ReusefulUK, www.scrapstoresuk.org
- *Spot the Difference: Animals*, £4.99, www.dk.com



PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Expert opinion:

Lala Manners,
director of Active

Matters, says that when it comes to looking at the most effective resources to encourage gross motor skills within the nursery, it is important to keep it 'simple, manageable and accessible.'

'Use what you've got in the indoor environment – the floor, walls, tables, chairs and big bean bags. Children are familiar with these materials: they can carry a chair, push a table and move a beanbag around. Ask them to build an obstacle course with these objects. They can pull themselves onto a table, using their upper-body strength, jump off onto a beanbag with help, stand up on the bean bag, which requires balance and core strength, roll onto the floor and then crawl under a chair. Some children may not be able to pull onto the table, so ask them how they might get up. Perhaps they might get a chair.

'The object of the obstacle course

is to decide for themselves how to do it, take responsibility and look after each other and use skills that they can transfer to other parts of their life – such as climbing the stairs or getting onto the sofa.

'Practitioners shouldn't concentrate on the end result – whether or not they all completed the course. Just because children didn't join in, it doesn't mean that nothing is happening. Some children may just watch for a few weeks and may do it at home or in the playground.

'Outdoors, don't waste money on large constructions. The possibilities are often not great. Tyres, crates, heavy things children can carry and stack all require big movements, which are very important and are good for strength, co-ordination and balance.'

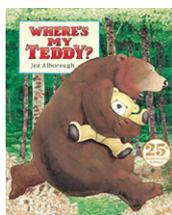
RESOURCES

- Loose Parts Obstacle Course, £319, www.cosydirect.com
- H Crates (12pk), £98.50, www.cosydirect.com
- Push me-pull me, £127 for one, www.communityplaythings.co.uk



- Climbing Crest, £249.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Monkey Bars, £195, www.cosydirect.com
- Natural Balance Collection (27pk), £84.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Smooth Back Slide, £34.95, www.cosydirect.com
- Simply Sturdy Steps Set, £169.95, www.cosydirect.com
- Scogym Indoor Gymnastics Activity Set, £329.95, www.tts-group.co.uk
- Standing Balance Round Seesaw, £99.95, www.tts-group.co.uk

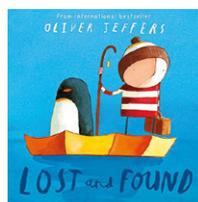
From top:
TTS's
Standing
Balance
Round
Seesaw;
Scogym
Activity
Set; and
Community
playthings' Push
me-pull me



Where's my Teddy?
by Jez Alborough



The Gruffalo's Child
by Julia Donaldson



Lost and Found
by Oliver Jeffers



PSED Expert opinion

The Personal, Social and Emotional Development area of

learning is about supporting children's independence. Many emotional experiences involve risk for young children. For example, having the courage to go up to a group of children and ask to join in a game or facing fears of the dark, which can involve reading scary stories about monsters.

Author **Gaynor Rice** says, 'When children face situations where there's a possibility of it going wrong – for example, putting their wellies on the wrong feet – there is an element of risk. If they don't face these situations – and they don't have a go and get it wrong – they don't develop the resilience later in life. The risk part comes in the child taking that step and the adult being there to facilitate them and allow the child to explore their emotions and feelings.'

To help a child deal with separation, another common emotional risk, Ms Rice suggests having an area in the nursery that feels homely, with cushions, a lamp or perhaps a sofa. She also advises

that the child has a shoe box where they can store their personal items, perhaps a teddy from home that they can access when they want it. Planned activities that subtly help children deal with the unexpected include bringing an interesting animal into the nursery for the children to meet.

RESOURCES

- **Books:** *The Gruffalo's Child* by Julia Donaldson (MacMillan); *Where's my Teddy?* by Jez Alborough (Candlewick Press); *Lost and Found* by Oliver Jeffers (Harper Collins)
- *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* Wooden Character Set, £20, www.yellow-door.net
- *Emotions... On the Move Kit*, £150, www.yellow-door.net
- *How Do You Feel Mirror*, £36, www.cosydirect.com
- *Role Play Superheroes Collection*, £110, www.earlyexcellence.com

Top right: How Do You Feel Mirror from Cosy Direct
Middle: Yellow Door's *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* Wooden Character Set
Bottom: Role Play Superheroes Collection by Early Excellence





LITERACY

Expert opinion:

Keeping it 'meaningful,

motivating and exciting' is the key to engaging children in literacy experiences, explains early years consultant **Caroline Eaton**.

'Try to weave it in to your everyday provision,' she advises. 'If the children are role playing mechanics, provide pens and writing boards so that they can tick off their work on a checklist. When baking or cooking, allow children to write the shopping list – and preferably go out to buy the ingredients. Shared writing experiences that lead to a purpose are motivational and challenging at the same time.'

'Children also need lots of experience at listening to stories as well as playing and telling them for themselves. The language project I am currently involved with has found the Story Cube useful, particularly for inexperienced storytellers as it gives them a visual prompt. When rolling the die, the



child makes a story based on the pictures that they can see.

'One child I work with has selective mutism, so just opening her mouth is a challenge. For other children who may not have English as their first language, attempting to read is a huge risk. Settings should try to include traditional stories from the cultures of the children at the setting. This would be more meaningful to them and they might be more likely to want to share their thoughts and feelings and come up with their own stories

Rhyming Pebbles from Yellow Door (above) and Early Excellence's going-home bags (below)



which they can re-enact through role play or small-world play. Also, don't forget to always let the child have a go at writing their name next to their artwork.'

RESOURCES

- Learning Resources Soft Foam Story Starter Picture Cubes, £11, www.amazon.co.uk
- Mini Literacy Station, £99.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Clipboard Talking Stand, £9.99, www.cosydirect.com
- The Literacy Hub, £199, www.cosydirect.com
- Find the Rhyme App, £12-£30, www.yellow-door.net
- Traditional Tales Story Picture Cards (30pk), £9.99, www.tts-group.co.uk
- Nursery Rhymes & Songs Collection of going-home bags for children aged two to three, £175, and Forest Scenery Collection, £14.99, both from www.earlyexcellence.com
- Rhyming Pebbles, £20, www.yellow-door.net
- Stories... On the Move Kit, £150, www.yellow-door.net



MATHS

Expert opinion:

Mathematics is so

much more than numbers. It's about seeing patterns, making connections and thinking critically. For this reason, practitioners need to ensure that there are

plenty of real-life problems to find and be solved. For example, sorting the bricks by size and shape when children have finished using them, measuring ingredients to make cakes, or ensuring everyone gets some snack and has somewhere to sit.

Early maths expert, author and consultant **Elaine Bennet** says, 'In all of these everyday contexts there are aspects of estimation, prediction and seeing interlinked relationships. These are the core elements of maths. Maths is so much more than placing numbers in a sandpit or water tray. By putting maths on a plate for children we take away the essential element of risk, adventure, challenge and the discovery of real problems to be solved.'



'Outside is the perfect place to explore maths on a big, noisy, messy, multi-sensory, risky, exciting level. A place to take risks as children explore position, direction, speed, distance, measure, shape, movement and quantity in meaningful and purposeful contexts.'

'Open-ended natural loose parts – bricks, leaves, shells, stones [pictured left] – are examples of useful resources that can be used for many things; for example, measuring, counting, sorting, calculating and scoring. If I was going to invest in anything it would be Community Playthings' Hollow Blocks and some A-frames and ladders. In terms of a commercial maths resource, Numicon gives children a clear image of number.'

RESOURCES

- 'A' Frame & Ladders, £299.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Introductory Set of Hollow Blocks, £410, and Unit Blocks, Introductory Set, £250, both from www.communityplaythings.com



Numicon Starter Apparatus Kit from The Consortium Education



Early Excellence's Basic Block Set



Community Playthings' Hollow Blocks

- Numicon Starter Apparatus Kit, £249, www.education-supplies.co.uk
- Cosy Complete Loose Parts Panacea (100+ items), £385, www.cosydirect.com
- Ephgrave's 5 Minute Timer Whiteboard, £29.95, www.cosydirect.com
- Imagineering Blocks, £295, www.cosydirect.com
- Medium Basic Block Set (56 pieces), £64.95, www.earlyexcellence.com
- Creative Star's Messy Maths: 50 things to do before you are 6 and 3/4, £3.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Giant Balance Scales, £74.99, www.cosydirect.com

UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD



Expert opinion:

'Understanding the world is really what risk is all about,' says consultant **Anne Gladstone**. 'So the more everyday items, resources, experiences and phenomena that children are able to experience, the more they will understand their world and the risks it poses, and thus how to approach and manage those risks themselves in their everyday lives.'

Activities that enable children to use real-life tools will help them to test their limits, understand their capabilities and enjoy success. For example, using a hand-drill to make a wooden pendant, preparing damper bread to cook over a campfire, and cutting vegetables for soup.

Getting grubby and muddy outside brings new challenges and the chance to face anxieties. Children can try climbing a tree, making a mud pie, picking blackberries or gardening.



Physical play, such as following an obstacle course, jumping off different levels and using a rope swing, enables children to hypothesise, make judgements and choices, take decisions and evaluate outcomes, all of which are good for self-esteem and building resilience.

RESOURCES

- Woodwork Bench, £249, and

Above: Cosy's Woodwork Bench; (right) Adventures Outdoors cards set by Yellow Door



Natural Stepping Stones, £18.99, www.cosydirect.com

- Basic Workbench, £350, or Complete Workbench, £645, both from www.communityplaythings.com
- Stem Station (Tinkering & Investigations), £342.50, www.cosydirect.com
- Adventures Outdoors cards set: Mud, Wind, Puddles by Claire Warden from Mindstretchers, £10 each; Dino Dig Scene Kit, £29, www.yellow-door.net
- Farm Life Barn, £49.99, www.schleich-s.co.uk

Left: Schleich's Farm Life Barn



EXPRESSIVE ARTS AND DESIGN

Expert opinion:

Opportunities to learn and practise using a wide variety of tools and media – such as the glue-gun, scissors, hole punch and stapler, woodwork tools, paper and card, glues, paints, collage and construction, such as large blocks – can have an extremely positive impact on a child's self-esteem and confidence.

Early years consultant **Anni McTavish** says, 'It's key to strike the right balance between child-initiated play and exploration, as well as direct teaching of specific skills; for example, how to use a glue-gun safely.'

When thinking about what resources to provide, she says, 'Offer open-ended materials that support children to take risks and be creative, and play with ideas and try things out.'

'A mixture of familiar and different materials will support a child to take risks imaginatively. For example, children will benefit from having a familiar home-corner space to build their confidence but, in addition, stretch their imagination through an

exciting role-play area, such as a lunar landing and space rocket launch pad.

'Also, offer them the chance to take part in performance arts, such as dance and movement or speaking in public, which is all about taking risks emotionally.'

RESOURCES

- Stage and Backdrop, £129.99, www.cosydirect.com
- Freestander Trio, £295, www.cosydirect.com
- 3m Blackboard Set (3pk), £148, www.cosydirect.com
- Clear Acrylic Outdoor Mark Making Panel, £39.95, www.tts-group.co.uk
- Double Sided Wooden Outdoor Writing Boards, £21.95, www.tts-group.co.uk
- Kneel Up Store & Draw Table, £189.95, www.earlyyearsresources.co.uk
- Painting Window, £150, www.earlyyearsdirect.com
- Staedtler Assorted Triplus Jumbo Colouring Pencils, £27.99; Chubbi Stumps, £13.47; and Collage Jars, £11.93, all at www.hope-education.co.uk
- Writing Belts, £11.99, www.cosydirect.com



Hope's Chubbi Stumps (above), Collage Jars (right) and Jumbo Colouring Pencils (bottom right)
Below: TTS's Writing Boards



Offer open-ended materials that support children to take risks and be creative

