

# The Continuous Provision for two year olds

Getting continuous provision right unlocks deep engagement, nurtures independence, and meets every child's developmental needs

**Continuous provision** refers to the carefully planned environment and resources that are consistently available to young children throughout the day. For two-year-olds, it forms the foundation of their learning and development by offering opportunities to explore, play, and build skills at their own pace — even when adults aren't directly leading activities.

## What two year olds need

- **Consistency & Familiarity** Young children thrive on routine. Continuous provision offers stable areas like sand, water, role play, and construction that remain available daily, helping children feel secure and confident.
- **Independent Exploration** Resources are accessible and age-appropriate, encouraging toddlers to make choices, follow their interests, and develop autonomy.
- **Developmentally Appropriate** The environment supports key areas of development — physical, social, emotional, and communication — through open-ended materials like blocks, crates, nature materials, sensory trays, and picture books.
- **Embedded Learning** Through repeated play, children rehearse skills such as pouring, stacking, sharing, and talking. This repetition is vital for deep learning at this age.
- **Responsive to Needs** While the provision is continuous, it's also flexible. Practitioners observe and adapt resources to meet the evolving interests and developmental stages of the children.



## Developing and Planning Continuous Provision

Continuous provision is not just about what's accessible — it's about the **intentional resources** added to each area that enable learning to continue even in the absence of a practitioner.

- **Planning** should be closely linked to children's **assessments, observations, and daily evaluations** of their engagement with the environment.
- **Open-ended, high-quality resources** are introduced across all areas of learning — indoors and outdoors — to support investigation, exploration, and thinking skills.
- Practitioners should **evaluate the environment daily**, reflecting on observations to identify how well areas are used, and if resources are responding to children's interests and developmental needs.

## Enhancing Continuous Provision

- Rotate materials to maintain interest while keeping core resources consistent.
- Add provocations (e.g., themed objects or photos) to spark curiosity.
- Use observations to tailor provision to individual needs and interests.
- Include multicultural and inclusive resources to reflect all children's backgrounds.

## Examples of areas within the Continuous Provision

Area	Resources	Skills Supported
Role Play	Soft dolls, kitchen sets, dress-up clothes	Social interaction, language, imagination
Construction	Large blocks, stacking cups, Duplo, cardboard boxes, loose parts	Fine motor, spatial awareness, problem-solving
Sensory Play	Sand, water, rice trays, natural materials	Tactile exploration, early science, vocabulary
Creative Area	Chunky crayons, paint, glue sticks, collage	Expression, fine motor, colour recognition
Book Corner	Board books, cushions, puppets, story props, home made photo books, rhymes	Language, listening, early literacy
Quiet/ cosy area	Cushions, blankets, soft toys, sensory bottles, board books, calming music, photos of family members, resources to explore emotions	Emotional regulation, self-awareness, early language
Small World	Farm animals, vehicles, people figures, heuristic resources	Storytelling, sequencing, imaginative play
Physical Play	Soft climbing equipment, balls, tunnels, crates, tyres, planks, tree stumps	Gross motor, coordination, confidence
Mark Making	Whiteboards, chalks, paint rollers	Early writing, hand-eye coordination

## Reflective Prompts for Practitioners

Use these questions to evaluate and improve your continuous provision daily. For each area in your continuous provision consider:

Have I avoided over crowding the resource boxes? Are the resources in this area meaningful and manageable, or are they just filling space?

- Do the children like to play here?
- How do they play here — independently, collaboratively, imaginatively?
- Have I got the right resources for their age, stage, and interests?
- What skills might they develop in this area?
- What language might they use or hear here?
- Are the resources child-accessible or adult-controlled?
- Is this area supporting the continuation of learning without adult direction?
- What changes could I make to increase engagement or challenge?

## Linking the Continuous Provision to the Characteristics of Effective Learning

Which areas or opportunities were particularly effective in supporting children's learning behaviours. Why was this?

**Playing and Exploring:** finding out and exploring; playing with what they know; being willing to 'have a go'

**Active Learning:** being involved and concentrating; keeping on trying; enjoying achieving what they set out to do

**Creating and Thinking Critically:** having their own ideas; making links; choosing ways to do things