

# Information for families about the Australian Early Development Census



# Contents

What is the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)?	3
What is so important about the early years?	5
How does the AEDC help my children and my community?	6
AEDC domains	10

TITLE: Information for families about the Australian Early Development Census  
SCIS NO: 1706376  
ISBN: 978-0-7307-4659-1

© Commonwealth of Australia and WA Department of Education 2025

This publication may be freely copied in whole or part and in any format in an education institution for non-commercial education purposes.  
This material is available on request in appropriate alternative formats.

Department of Education

151 Royal Street, East Perth WA 6004  
T: 9264 5366 W: [education.wa.edu.au](http://education.wa.edu.au)

# What is the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)?

The AEDC is an Australian-wide census that gathers information about young children's development.

It provides a snapshot of children's progress at national, state/territory and community levels.

The AEDC is carried out every three years with the first data collection taking place in 2009. Schools throughout Australia participate, with teachers completing a questionnaire for each child in their first year of full-time schooling (Pre-primary). The information collected is reported at a group level so individual children are not identified.

The census gathers information on five key areas of children's development referred to as domains, including:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

These five domains are considered good predictors of adult health, education and social outcomes. By understanding how young children are progressing, communities can look at ways to positively influence child development.

The early years  
really do matter!



# What is so important about the early years?

The first five years of a child's life are incredibly important. From the moment children are born, their brains undergo huge changes.

The early stages of children's development are influenced by genes and the environment. While genes provide the initial road map for brain development, it is children's everyday experiences, the opportunities available and the relationships they make that shape the adults they will become.

As parents/carers, you are the most important people in your children's lives. Extended family, friends, people at school and the broader community also play key roles in children's development. Daily opportunities to play, laugh, and learn – along with good health, nutrition and positive relationships – are extremely important in making sure children's brains develop to their full potential.

Giving children the best start in life enhances their readiness to learn at school and builds solid foundations for healthy development, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

# How does the AEDC help my children and my community?

The AEDC provides your community with important information about children's development in your local area.

Childhood development is influenced by many factors – from the family environment and community to wider influences such as government policies, environmental conditions, and broader social norms, beliefs and attitudes.

The AEDC moves the focus of effort from the individual child to all children in the community. The information is used to understand what is working well in the community, and what needs to be improved or developed, to ensure children are offered safe and nurturing learning environments where they can grow and thrive.

The results are already benefiting communities. They are being used to shape early childhood initiatives and policies that support schools, community groups and government – all of which benefit you and your family.





Caring and positive  
relationships assist  
healthy brain development.

# Influences on children's development





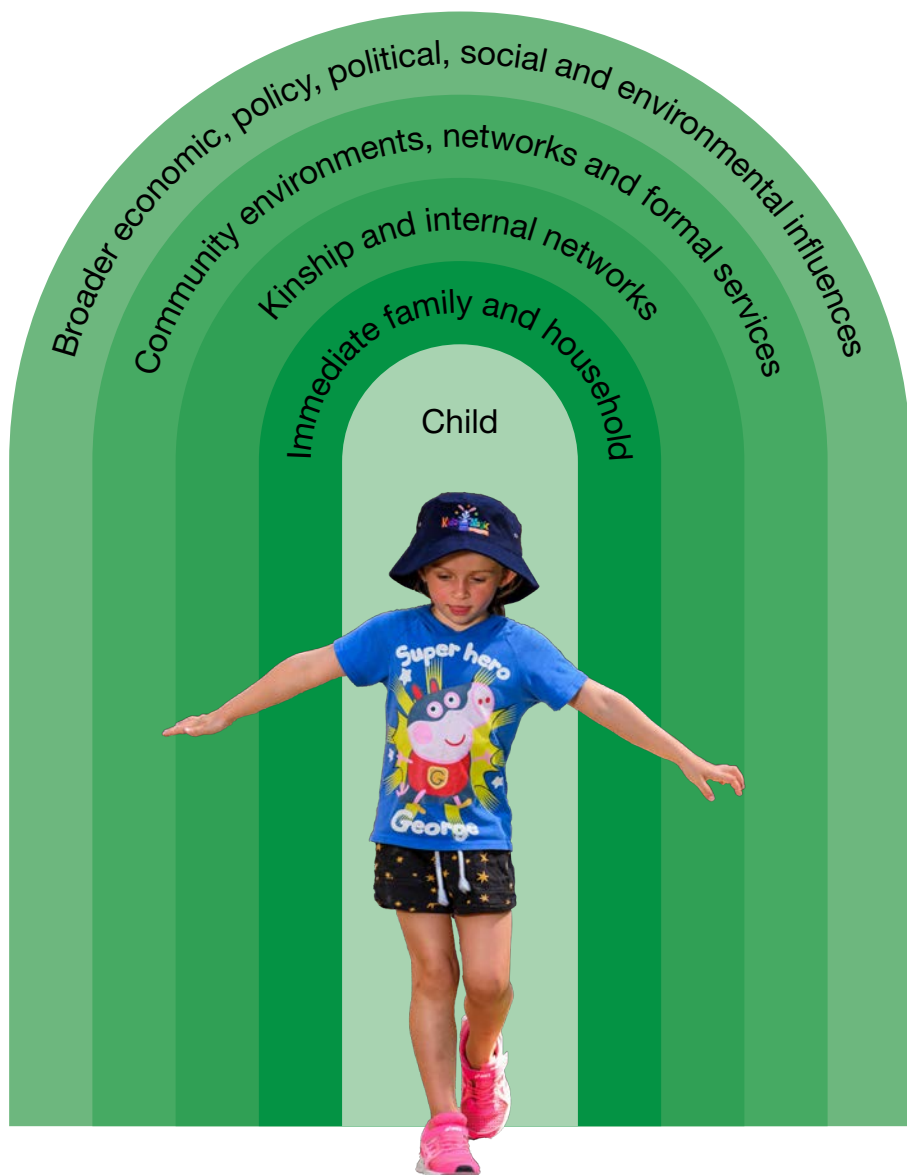


Figure 1: Influences on children's development

# AEDC domains



## Physical health and wellbeing

This domain looks at whether children are healthy, independent and physically ready for the school day. It also looks at children's motor skills. It includes:

- taking part in physical activities at home and school (e.g. running, and climbing stairs and on playground equipment).
- eating healthy breakfasts and lunches
- having good personal hygiene
- showing a hand preference (i.e. left or right) and coordination
- being ready for school on time
- having enough energy for a full school day.



## Social competence

This domain looks at children's overall social development including how they play, share and get along with other children. It also looks at children's approaches to learning and readiness to explore new things. It includes:

- sharing
- working independently to solve day-to-day problems
- accepting responsibility for actions
- showing respect for others and their property
- showing curiosity and asking questions
- showing self-control
- getting along with others
- following rules and class routines
- exploring new books, toys and unfamiliar objects and games.





## Emotional maturity

This domain looks at whether children are able to concentrate during the school day, are able to help others, and can regulate their emotions. It includes:

- helping others who may be hurt or sick, are difficulty with tasks
- concentrating on tasks
- inviting others to join in
- feeling generally happy and comfortable at school
- waiting patiently to take turns
- managing anger and disappointment.







## Language and cognitive skills (school-based)

This domain looks at children's literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their ability to remember things.

It focuses mainly on the basic skills that are important for school. It includes:

- remembering things (e.g. events, numbers, book characters)
- showing interest in books and reading
- identifying some letters of the alphabet and attaching sounds to some letters
- being aware of rhyming words (e.g. cat rhymes with mat)
- showing interest in writing (e.g. scribbling, pretending to write, drawing)
- reading and writing simple words and sentences (e.g. writing their own names)
- showing interest in maths and number games
- counting
- recognising shapes and numbers
- sorting and classifying (e.g. shapes, colours and sizes)
- understanding simple time concepts (e.g. today and bedtime)




## Communication skills and general knowledge

This domain looks at whether children can communicate easily and effectively, and have adequate general knowledge. It includes:

- participating in imaginative play
- playing games with other children
- having good communication skills (e.g. speaking clearly, communicating their needs and understanding others)
- talking positively to other children and adults
- participating in storytelling
- showing knowledge about the world (e.g. knowing that an apple is a fruit and that dogs bark).







The AEDC  
provides  
information  
to build and  
strengthen  
communities for  
our children.

Detailed information and resources

[www.education.wa.edu.au/aedc-](http://www.education.wa.edu.au/aedc-resources-for-families)

[resources-for-families](http://www.education.wa.edu.au/aedc-resources-for-families)

[www.aedc.gov.au](http://www.aedc.gov.au)

Other useful parenting resources

[www.raisingchildren.net.au](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au)

[www.education.wa.edu.au/before-school](http://www.education.wa.edu.au/before-school)

## Our Children • Our Communities • Our Future

Since 2002, the Australian Government has worked in partnership with eminent child health research institutes, the Centre for Community Child Health at The Royal Children's Hospital and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and The Kids Research Institute Australia to deliver the Australian Early Development Census program to communities nationwide. The Australian Government continues to work with its partners and with state and territory governments to implement the AEDC.

Acknowledgements: The Department of Education acknowledges funding from the Australian Government to assist with the production of this publication. Western Australian schools and teachers who completed the AEDC are acknowledged for their contributions.

To find out more about the AEDC visit [aedc.gov.au](http://aedc.gov.au)