

Ready or Not

A resource for museums, galleries and nurseries working with families whose children are about to start school.

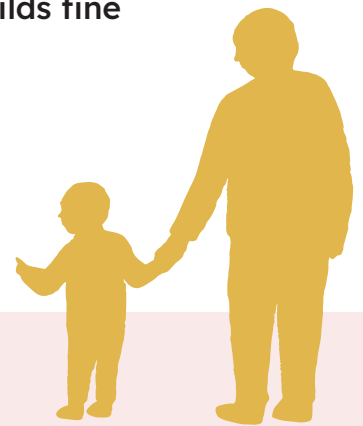
Helping children get ready for school isn't all about ABC or maths - it's also about building the skills needed to navigate a new environment.

Research at the University of Cambridge¹ tells us that learning through play is a very effective way of supporting children's development. Creative activities offer the opportunity for children to express themselves. They also provide a safe space for exploring feelings and connecting with others.

Drawing provides children with ways to represent ideas, things and people. Using open-ended art materials like clay, cardboard and paper builds fine motor skills as well as creative-thinking and confidence.

Some key skills that help prepare children for school include:

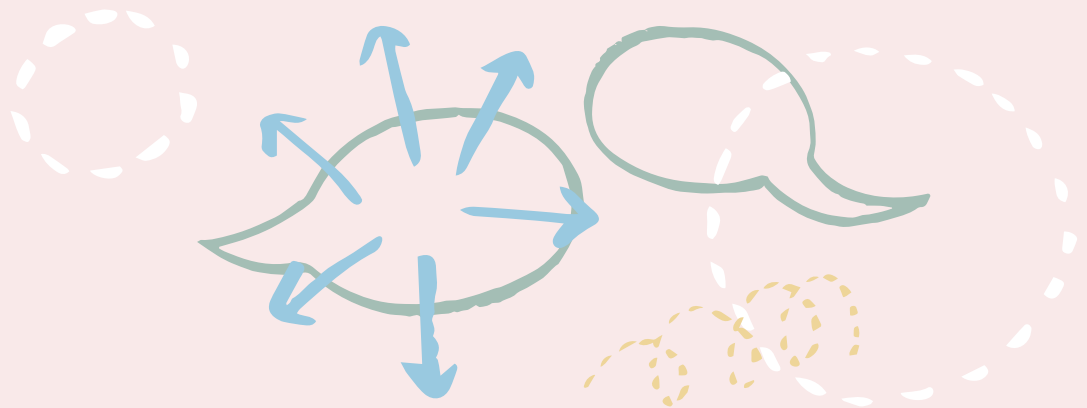
Confidence Listening Turn-taking Empathy Perseverance



For museums and galleries

Take a look at your collection - are there artworks and objects that relate to some of the themes below?

- Relationships
- Friendships
- Emotions
- Growing up
- Changes
- Journeys
- Finding patterns



You could explore the same artwork in multiple ways, using imaginative play through discussion and storytelling or constructive play experimenting with art materials.



¹ This resource draws from the Ready or Not research project funded by the ESRC and led by Professor Claire Hughes. You can find out more at www.readyornotstudy.uk

Here are some example activities, using artworks from the Kettle's Yard collection. Together, these activities seek to develop children's soft skills, set up a creative space to talk about different aspects of starting school, and build families' confidence for what lies ahead as their children start school.

Take a look at this painting by Winifred Nicholson together. It helps us to explore the theme of Journeys.



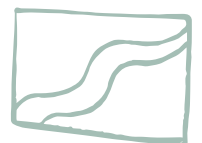
Winifred Nicholson, *Road Along a Roman Road*, 1926 © Trustees of Winifred Nicholson

Discussion: Discuss what you see in the painting. If you could jump inside the artwork where would you go?

Storytelling: Can you think of a journey you have been on before? What happened and how did you feel? Together, write a letter or postcard from this place to a friend or other family member.

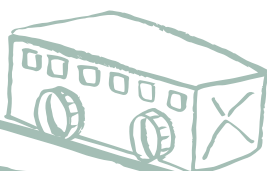


Drawing: Make a journey drawing - draw a pathway across a piece of paper and draw details along the path. See and download the 'Drawing a Journey' activity sheet for further details at www.kettlesyard.co.uk/readyornot



Construction: Construct a vehicle to travel up this road using scrap or recycled materials.

Extend: What journey will you have to go on to get to school? How will you travel there? What will you see on the way?



We learn to examine body language and think about how and why other people present themselves to the world. Take a look at this self-portrait by Christopher Wood together.



Christopher Wood, *Self-Portrait*, 1927

Discussion: How do you think this man is feeling? What do you think he likes doing? Where might he live?

Construction: The artist used this painting to tell us about himself. Create an 'all about me' collage that tells people about you. This could include the things that you enjoy doing, your favourite colours, places, food or animals, or who your family are.

Role play: Imagine meeting the man in this painting. How could you greet him? What questions could you ask to find out what he likes and dislikes?

Drawing: Use a mirror to draw a self-portrait, looking closely at details like face shape, hair colour, eye colour.



Extend: How might you get to know new people at school?

Take a look at this spiral of pebbles together. Jim Ede, who created it, needed a way to organise and display his collection in a small space. Organising his pebbles by size led to this beautiful pattern.

Discussion: Describe the shape, size and colour of the pebbles. Which is the biggest? Which is the smallest?

Construction: Use clay to create small sculptures. Have a range of objects and tools which can add texture like toothpicks, cotton buds and twigs.

Sorting: Gather a range of small objects from home or outside and sort them into groups by colour, shape, size or texture. Use language such as 'the same' and 'different' and measure words such as 'biggest' and 'heaviest'. Arrange them in a special shape, either somewhere at home or in the place you found them.



Jim Ede, *Spiral of Stones*

Extend: What might you need to get organised for when you go to school?



Tips for family workshops:

- Encourage conversation within families, to give opportunities for children to express their thoughts and ideas and build up confidence.
- Encourage collaboration within families to develop listening and turn-taking skills.
- Have decision-making opportunities, offering a variety of tools and materials.
- Use materials which build fine-motor skills, like cutting with scissors, pinching clay, holding a pencil.
- Be specific with praise. Rather than “what a lovely drawing” say “I like the details you’ve drawn on the trees”.
- Give praise for effort, for example “I am impressed with how much effort you have put into your collage”.
- Have an area where artwork can be displayed and shared so that children know their work is valued.
- Allow families to take their creations home where possible and invite them to think about where they will display it.
- Have a print-out of the artwork you have explored in the workshop so that families can continue the conversation at home. Give ‘take-away’ activities and resources as goody-bags to enable these conversations to continue.
- Let families know the ways that this could help their children get ready for school, to encourage them to do similar things at home.



For nurseries



The activities outlined in this resource are suitable for use in any setting. You can find printable resources and images at www.kettlesyard.co.uk/readyornot



A nursery trip to a museum or gallery can also be a great way to help children get ready for the move to school. This will enable your nursery to put these activities into practice. For example, imagining and discussing what the museum or gallery might be like before you visit to dispel any fears. Using the journey to and from the museum or gallery to draw a journey together.

Get in touch with your local museum or gallery to find out what workshops and activities they can offer. They might even come to visit you too!



Design and illustration by Rachel McGivern