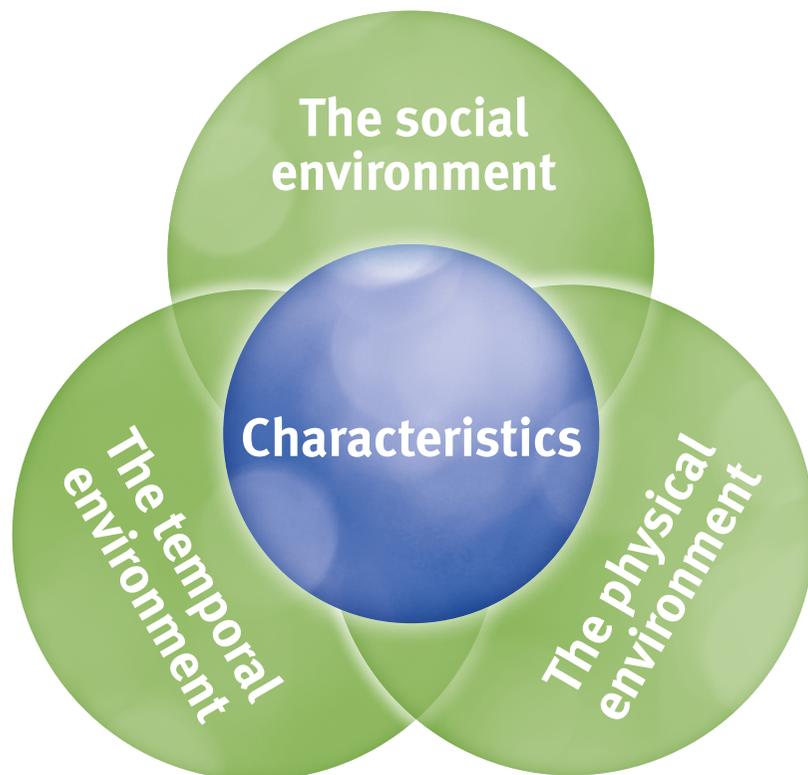


# Early years learning spaces

Early years teachers deliberately, purposefully and thoughtfully make decisions in co-constructing social, temporal and physical environments that are motivating, engaging, flexible, inviting, challenging and supportive for children. The *Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies* are central to the decisions teachers make about these environments; the social environment, the temporal environment and the physical environment.



## Early years environments

### The social environment

The social environment of indoor and outdoor early years learning spaces may be characterised by:

- an atmosphere where children feel safe, a sense of belonging and security
- positive relationships that foster motivation to learn, social collaboration, engagement and enjoyment
- adult leadership and scaffolding
- high quality verbal interactions, child-child and child-adult
- sustained, shared thinking in collaborative learning.

### The temporal environment

The temporal environment of indoor and outdoor early years learning spaces may be characterised by:

- responsive and flexible routines and transitions
- a balance between child and adult initiated learning experiences
- opportunities for spontaneous and planned learning
- a range and balance of pedagogical approaches
- extended periods of time to engage in sustained learning experiences.

### The physical environment

The physical environment of indoor and outdoor early years learning spaces may be characterised by:

- opportunities for children's voices to be considered and reflected in the design and care of the space
- opportunities that support age-appropriate risk taking, trial and error and challenge
- areas for children to engage in individual, small and whole group learning experiences that may be child and/or adult initiated
- active engagement in the natural environment
- active engagement and sensory exploration.

# Reflecting on early years learning spaces

This resource is intended for use by teachers and school teams in reflecting on the form, function and aesthetics of early years learning spaces and the possibilities that exist for enacting age-appropriate pedagogies. The *Characteristics of age-appropriate pedagogies* are unpacked as points for consideration that may assist decision-making when reflecting on social, temporal and physical environments.

Characteristic	Points for consideration	Decision-making		
	Opportunities for:	Social	Temporal	Physical
<b>Active</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children's enhanced focus, concentration, motivation and self-regulation</li> <li>interaction within a range of learning environments</li> <li>physical and embodied engagement in learning</li> <li>indoor and outdoor learning</li> </ul>			
<b>Agentic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>children's voice in their learning</li> <li>children's ideas and interests to be acknowledged and valued</li> <li>real world understandings and experiences</li> <li>child decision-making.</li> </ul>			

Characteristic	Points for consideration	Decision-making		
	Opportunities for:	Social	Temporal	Physical
<b>Collaborative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children and teachers to co-construct learning</li> <li>• child to child interactions</li> <li>• child to teacher interactions</li> <li>• sustained shared thinking and action</li> </ul>			
<b>Creative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children to consider “What if?”</li> <li>• provocations encouraging investigation, inquiry, artistry</li> <li>• exploration of/through diverse open-ended resources</li> <li>• new ways of thinking</li> </ul>			
<b>Explicit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teachers to clarify the purpose, processes, skills and understandings associated with a learning experience</li> <li>• children to know the purpose, processes, skills and understandings associated with a learning experience</li> <li>• children to be informed participants in their learning</li> <li>• teachers to value children as informed participants.</li> </ul>			

Characteristic	Points for consideration	Decision-making		
	Opportunities for:	Social	Temporal	Physical
<b>Language rich and dialogic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children to employ and model rich language</li> <li>• teachers to employ and model rich language</li> <li>• meaningful dialogues between children</li> <li>• meaningful dialogues between children and teachers</li> </ul>			
<b>Learner focused</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children's physical, intellectual, cultural, social and personal experiences and perspectives to be acknowledged, valued and enacted</li> <li>• differentiated learning</li> <li>• individual learning styles to be supported</li> </ul>			
<b>Narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal, written, oral and digital stories to be acknowledged</li> <li>• production of narratives through active processes</li> <li>• comprehension of narratives through active processes</li> <li>• play to be used as a vehicle for the narrative.</li> </ul>			

Characteristic	Points for consideration	Decision-making		
	Opportunities for:	Social	Temporal	Physical
<b>Playful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• children to innovate and enact new possibilities</li> <li>• making connections through imagination and creativity</li> <li>• exploration of alternate worlds and ways of thinking</li> <li>• playfulness to be enacted within pedagogical practices</li> </ul>			
<b>Responsive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• child, context, content and discipline appropriate learning</li> <li>• structure and spontaneity</li> <li>• open-ended and specific tasks</li> <li>• child-led and teacher-led learning</li> </ul>			
<b>Scaffolded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• modelling, encouraging, questioning, adding challenges and giving feedback</li> <li>• children's learning to be supported by their peers</li> <li>• children's learning to be supported by adults</li> <li>• varying the level of support provided as children gain increasing mastery.</li> </ul>			