

The Playgroup Principles

Core characteristics of high quality playgroups



Nine key principles underpin high quality effective playgroups. Each principle, listed below, outlines a core characteristic of playgroup, and is followed by action-oriented statements to inspire thought and discussion of how the principles can be implemented.



Playgroups are about play

Offer high-quality, fun, structured and unstructured play experiences for children and parents/carers and provide opportunities for play-based learning to support positive child development.



Playgroups are child-focused, child-inclusive and developmentally appropriate

Understand and acknowledge children's needs and individual perspectives and experiences. Support child development by providing developmentally appropriate activities in a supportive, collaborative environment, where carers participate and further develop skills in supporting children's growth.



Playgroups are about connection

Provide opportunities for carers to connect with other parents/carers, for families to connect with their local community, and for carers and children to connect with each other through play.



Playgroups are safe and welcoming

Ensure that the playgroup provides a culturally, physically and emotionally safe and inclusive space that is child safe. Ensure that it is warm and welcoming, accessible, and located in regular and consistent venues that are easily accessed.



Playgroups are culturally safe

Be adaptive to the needs of different cultural groups. Honour their cultural heritage and the needs of their children to be respected and supported in their culture.



Playgroups are flexible

Be flexible, responsive and adaptive to the needs of parents/carers and children and the local community. Be dynamic and ready to change as the needs of families change. Be adaptive and able to focus on the specific needs of the group.



Playgroups are both strengths-based and strengthening

Recognise and value the strengths, skills and knowledge of parents/carers while also offering a space to build on their strengths and capacities. Acknowledge the role of the parent/carer as the child's first teacher. Build on parents/carers' strengths and create opportunities for parents/carers to contribute. Be collaborative and co-design the group with families.



Playgroups have organisational level support and governance

Support individual playgroups with an adequately resourced organisation that provides oversight and assistance.



Supported playgroups draw on skilled facilitators to engage families and link to local services¹

Utilise staff with the qualifications (e.g., early childhood education, family support or community development), skills and/or qualities to build relationships and facilitate engagement between the families in the group. Playgroups are best supported by a facilitator with local knowledge who can foster relationships and connectedness.

The *Principles for high quality playgroups: Examples from research and practice* document expands upon these principles, providing practical examples and greater detail on the research evidence for those working with families attending playgroup or running community playgroup. It is available on the CFCA Playgroups page: www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/playgroups

¹ This principle applies to supported playgroups specifically, however, the engagement strategies outlined may be applicable to other playgroup models.

