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start learning



Kay Woods

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Start Learning

Kay Woods

Art projects to assess and improve your 2-5 year old child's development

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Publisher's Note

The early years of every child's life are crucial to their development. Every parent knows that. The anxiety that arises from reading about "normal" development and seeing the development of other children can be quite intense.

Kay Woods' book is a wonderful way to both help your child develop and to help you be comfortable with that development. Using art projects to focus activities means that that what is in this book is accessible to all. Choosing activities that help with development across the range of skills is the best way to help your child.

Good luck and enjoy their development!

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What this book offers



Tip any four children out of a wheelbarrow and you'll find a pile of children with very mixed abilities, all at different phases of their development. You may very well find, for example, a two year old girl who can already write her name and a four year old boy who is still struggling to write recognisable letters. It's easy if you're the parent of the two year old… but if you're the parent of the four year old, you're bound to be secretly worried.

The good news is that both of these children are developing perfectly normally. Children are expected to learn to write their letters when they are about four (not two), and it's a fact that many boys are slower to write than girls.

As a mother of both a two year old and a five year old, when I wrote this book, I understood the struggle it can be for parents to find out what is actually meant by normal development. Comparing your child against her peers can be misleading, while the opinions of friends and carers can appear contradictory and vague. I wanted to write a guide for parents that would answer your questions with facts. I will tell you what to expect and when from your two to five year old, help you to understand her learning process, and provide you with a straightforward method to assess her development yourself.

The book contains a collection of fun and easy-to-do art projects, each designed to allow you to follow, assess and stimulate your child's development in a key learning area. Choose an art project and read the background information so that you can see what is expected of your child at her age. As you complete the art project together and she practises her skills, you will gain an insight into her learning progress. This unique approach makes it possible to see for yourself if she is achieving at a level that is 'normal' for her age.

The most likely result of reading these books and working through the art projects is that the information will reassure you that your child is developing exactly as she should be. But if she really is falling behind in certain areas, then as a parent it is good to be aware. Having the facts gives you the power to decide what, if anything, you might want to do about it.

Kay Woods

Important note about safety

All children should be supervised at all times when doing the art projects and activities suggested in these books. Kay Woods and Tarquin can accept no responsibility for any accidents occurring to children as a result of doing these art projects and activities. Note that the materials used in these activities are suggestions only and it is entirely up to you to ensure that the objects and materials you give to your child are suitable for her age. Pay special attention when giving young children scissors, sharpened pencils, lengths of string, or anything small (like pom-poms or seeds) which are potential choke hazards.

Contents

Guidance for Readers 6

Personal, Social and Emotional Development 7

Joining in and sharing 8
Confidence to try new things 10
Concentrating on a task 12
Other people are different 13

Physical Development 17

Coordinating large body movements 18
Hand-eye co-ordination… 19
Self care 21

Mathematics 26

Counting 27
Changes in quantity 28
Shapes 30
Sizes and positions 31

Language and Literacy… 36

Following Instruction…....37
Talking…....38
Reading…....40
Writing…....41

Creative Development…....44

Colours, Shapes and Form…....45
Music…....47
Imagination…....48

Science… 54

Exploration and Investigation…....55
Our Environment - Natural and Built…....57
Using Tools Correctly…....59

Guidance for Readers

Your Child's 'Education' from Two to Five

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was created to set national standards in the UK for children's learning and development from birth to age five. 'Wherever you are from in the world' these standards provide a framework that is useful. At this age, learning is not just about which academic skills your child has mastered – counting, colours, writing etc. It also looks at a child's physical development, feelings, language, emotions and social skills. It is a child's ability to share, take turns, and concentrate when appropriate, not the child who can count highest at age five, who is best set up for success at 'big school' and in life.

The outcomes for five year olds listed in this book are based on the series of early learning goals laid down by the EYFS which identify the knowledge, skills and understanding that children are expected to have acquired by the end of their school reception year.

What should you do if you are concerned that your child has developmental delays?

Child development is a sequence of milestones through which most children pass broadly within the same timetable. This book explains the typical pattern and typical timetable at which development milestones are reached by most (but certainly not all) children.

So if you have read the development notes for a topic, finished the art project, and feel that your child seems 'behind' in an area, do try and keep things in perspective. If your child is six months later than 'normal' learning the word triangle this does not mean she will be labelled a slow learner for life! However, if your child has reached two-and-a-half and still hasn't spoken a single word, then this may be a cause for concern.

Discuss your concerns with your child's nursery staff and other carers – and if you are genuinely worried then you should discuss this with a health profressional.

How hard should you 'push' your child?

It's good to have high expectations of your child, but try to resist the temptation to feel you should give your child a head start by 'pushing her ahead'. If you find that your two year old can count to 3, of course it is tempting to try and keep her sitting there until she can count to 5. Unfortunately, your two year old simply isn't ready for concepts like 5. Save your energy to congratulate her on learning 1-2-3, and eventually 4 and 5 will come when they are needed. Let your child lead the way and she will get there in her own time. It is your job as a parent to encourage and support her natural curiosity, not to 'prepare her for nursery', or make sure she's 'ahead' when she starts school.

The development notes in this book cover a massive age range in the lifespan of a young child. Your two year old is still just a toddler … but by five she will have progressed through nursery and grown into an independent school child. Enjoy these art projects as you work through them together, and prepare to be amazed at just how much your very young child has already learned in such a very short time.