



# National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education: Learning through Play

The early years are a critical time to introduce key concepts for lifelong learning. Road safety education is an important component of early childhood education as it lays the foundation for children to become safer road users. The National Practices for Early Childhood Road Safety Education have been developed by early childhood education and road safety experts across Australia and New Zealand. The eight national practices are aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework.

## National Practice No. 3 – Learning through Play: Road safety education is enhanced when play underpins the whole curriculum and reflects children’s interests and strengths.

**What is it?** Effective early childhood education and care acknowledges and seeks to strengthen the role of active and uninterrupted play as a central component. Through play, children are given the opportunity to learn organically through ‘doing’. When children are given the opportunity to direct their own play, they can learn to make choices in a safe space without the fear of failing, thereby developing their sense of confidence to embolden them to continue to learn.

Early childhood educators facilitate this by providing materials, space and time for children to learn through play at their own pace. These play contexts can be spontaneous or planned, through a process of co-construction with the children. Adults act as role models, providing guidance for children as they undertake the process of learning safer behaviour on the road, facilitating actively and ensuring that children have the required skills and knowledge.

Educators can consider the following suggestions:

- Support children’s ideas and interest, and actively encourage them to act out road safety scenarios. Educators may have to prompt targeted play. When appropriate, join in with their play experiences to support and develop their own understandings.
- Answer children’s questions about the road environment via different travel modes as they arise, and respond respectfully and authentically.
- Evaluate and assess children’s understanding of road safety education by observing their play, seek to identify gaps and then plan activities to enhance understandings of road safety.
- Support children’s understanding of road safety by providing resources and props for children to use (for example, toy cars, road mats and traffic signs) to stimulate conversations about road safety that stimulate conversations about road safety.
- Discuss road safety using posters and invite children to display signs at child height within the room.

