

Personal Care

Personal Care

Personal Care

FOUNDATIONS FOR PERSONAL CARE SKILLS

Young children have an inborn drive to become autonomous or independent – to do things for themselves. Personal care skills or self-help skills include self-feeding, washing hands, using a tissue, zipping/unzipping/unbuttoning, etc. These personal care skills can also be called life skills.

How adults respond to a child’s exploring behavior is based on their cultural values of independence. Where *independence* is a high cultural priority, adults encourage and facilitate the building of skills needed for children to master their personal care needs. In this independence-focused situation, the mastery of self-feeding, dressing, toileting, and caring for hands, face, and nose results in increased self-confidence among children and a belief in their own capabilities.

In some cultures, such as Japan, *interdependence* is a high priority. In an interdependence-focused environment, the assertive actions of young children, like pushing the adult hand trying to feed them, is met with adults teaching children to accept the help, even if they want to do it themselves (Gonzalez-Mena, J. 2007).

In early education settings where children from many cultures are present, it is important for providers to consider that their own values of independence may be different from the families they serve. Making an effort to understand the preference of each family will foster effective educator/family partnerships in supporting the development of all children.

Interdependence is learned in a variety of ways, including holding a spoon or drinking from a cup. Chewing foods builds muscles used for speech, and large and small motor activities encourage healthy bodies. Children are encouraged to be creative thinkers in their play and to talk about their discoveries and creations. Children observe and model other children. They begin playing side by side and may even begin to offer to include another child in their motor activities like rolling a ball, running, or taking turns on a balance beam.

Healthy children are better learners. As young children master the personal care skills, they expand their learning of the consequences of appropriate personal hygiene and healthy food choices. Children begin at a young age to learn about age-appropriate healthy choices that will support a healthy lifestyle.

Key Findings

- Young children begin to develop personal skills early in their lives.
- Mastering personal care skills is part of any child’s daily routine.
- Young children at the chronological age are often on many different developmental levels.
- A wide variety of hands-on activities encourages children to practice personal care skills.
- Personal care or self-help skills are life skills.
- The development of personal care skills is a step-by-step developmental process.

GLOSSARY

Autonomous: have the ability to be self-directed and accomplish tasks without control from others

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Baker, L. & Brightman, A.J. (2004). *Steps to independence: Teaching everyday skills to children with special needs* (4th ed.). Baltimore, MD: Brookes

Cook, R.E.; Klein, M.D.; & Tessier, A. (2008) *Adapting early childhood curricula for children with special needs* (7th ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008) *Child, Family, and Community: Family-Centered Early Care and Education* (5th ed.) Prentice-Hall

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2007). *Diversity in Early Care and Education: Honoring Differences*. McGraw-Hill Humanities

Gonzalez-Mena, J.; & Widmeyer-Eyer, D. (2011) *Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers: A curriculum of respectful, responsive care and education*. McGraw-Hill Humanities

Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2009) *50 Strategies for Communicating and Working with Diverse Families* (2nd ed.). Prentice-Hall

Sandall, S.R.; Hemmeter, J.L., Smith, B.J. & McLean, M.E. (Eds.). (2005). *DEC Recommended practices: A comprehensive guide for practical application in early intervention/early childhood special education*. Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children. Longmont, CO: Sopris West

Sandall, S.R., & Schwartz, I.S. (2008) *Building blocks for teaching preschoolers with special needs* (2nd ed.) Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Company

ORAL MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

❖ COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD: NONE

❖ ISTAR-KR: Personal Care/Oral Motor

Newborns begin to develop oral motor control of lips and tongue and to swallow to they are able to take in liquids (food) to gain weight for survival. As infants develop, they gain increased oral motor control to tolerate thicker liquids and then transition to more complex textures, from lumpy to crunchy to meats. Oral Motor skills allow a child to take in foods, keep food in their mouth, move it around, and swallow it without choking.

Young Children are Learning When They:

- PC.1.1 Coordinates sucking, swallowing, breathing.
- PC.1.2 Swallows pureed or lumpy foods.
- PC.1.3 Uses tongue to move and mush solid foods.
- PC.1.4 Chews with rotary movement.
- PC.1.5 Use sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell to explore their world.
- PC.1.6 Explore things with mouth, hands, fingers, and toes.
- PC.1.7 Explore the environment (e.g., bang, shake, drop, mouth).
- PC.1.8 Use reflexes such as searching for something to suck, turning head to avoid obstruction of breath, and grasping an object.
- PC.1.9 Increase independence and drive to master developing motor abilities.
- PC.1.10 Show autonomy in self-care.
- PC.1.11 Demonstrate awareness of rules for safety.
- PC.1.12 Use adults as resources.
- PC.1.13 Show pride in physical/personal accomplishments.
- PC.1.14 Identify and solve problems through active explorations.

A child can be supported by an adult who:

- Describes environment with sensory words (e.g., hard/soft, rough/smooth, crunchy/chewy).
- Provides an environment rich with sounds, smells, sights, and tastes.
- Responds to cues for sucking.
- Gives opportunities for self feeding.
- Models chewing, biting and swallowing of food.
- Encourages trial of new foods and textures.

How it looks in everyday activities:

Makenna is a four month old infant who has just started at the child care center. She has just woken from her nap and has had her diaper changed and is waiting for her bottle. Lisa, her care giver, picks her up and goes to the rocking chair. Makenna appears comfortable, and is opening her mouth to receive the bottle. As Lisa feeds Makenna her bottle she notices that some of the formula is leaking from Makenna's mouth. Lisa adjusts her holding position to so Makenna can suck and swallow with more success, but some formula is still leaking out. Lisa makes a mental note to talk with her mother about how feeding is going at home and whether or not this is normal.

SELF-FEEDING

❖ COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD: NONE

❖ ISTAR-KR: Personal Care/Self-Feeding

Young children develop self-feeding skills much like other physical skills, in gradual steps of control. Younger infants may “ready” themselves by quieting and holding still when they see their bottle, while older infants begin to assist in feeding when they place their hands on a bottle being fed to them. Young toddlers first use their hands and fingers to get food into their mouths, and then become interested in spoons as they grab at and try to use accurately. Bottle feeding or nursing gives way to cup or sippy cup being handled independently by the older infant. Self-feeding by using utensils like any developmental skill requires practice to achieve accuracy and success. Spoon feeding transitions to using a fork and child sized knives to spread.

Young Children are Learning When They:

- PC.2.1 Cooperate with feeding.
- PC.2.2 Assist in feeding self.
- PC.2.3 Feed self.
- PC.2.4 Use utensils and open cup to feed self.
- PC.2.5 Serve self food and drink.
- PC.2.6 Assist with daily needs.
- PC.2.7 Push away something not wanted.
- PC.2.8 Use objects as tools.
- PC.2.9 Increase independence and drive to master developing motor abilities.
- PC.2.10 Finds ways to maneuver around an obstacle that is in the way of obtaining something desired.
- PC.2.11 Choose between two or more alternatives.
- PC.2.12 Sequence recurring events (e.g., “After I eat lunch, I take a rest.”).
- PC.2.13 Describe daily routine (e.g., home and/or school).
- PC.2.14 Complete basic responsibilities related to daily needs.
- PC.2.15 Apply movement concepts to specific movement situations (e.g., bend knees to soften the landing and avoid obstacles in the path).
- PC.2.16 Identify and solve problems through active explorations.
- PC.2.17 Show a growing independence in hygiene, nutrition, and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth, and toileting.

A child can be supported by an adult who:

- Models sharing and modeling the behaviors you want to encourage (e.g., say please or lend a helping hand).
- Does for, does with, and watches as the child learns to do things independently.
- Names items in the home and in the environment during nurturing routines.
- Discusses with the child the origin of items in the home (e.g., milk-cow, wooden table-tree, egg-chicken).
- Gives opportunities for self feeding, wiping the table, pouring etc.
- Encourages the child’s participation in art activities that utilize pincer grasp of thumb/forefinger (e.g., gluing small pieces of paper, peeling/sticking stickers, picking up small objects with fingers or tweezers).
- Provides activities that strengthen hand grasp (e.g., squeezing clay and play dough, squeezing water out of sponges, using a hand held hole punch to punch holes in paper of various thickness).

How it looks in everyday activities:

Jason is a 15 month old with some developmental delays. He and his family participate in First Steps Early Intervention services, and he receives weekly services from a developmental therapist and an occupational therapist. The providers have talked with Jason's mother, Stephanie, about the importance of young children learning to feed themselves. Stephanie says, "I think it is fine that Jason uses his fingers to eat. I just have a problem when he sometimes smashes food into his tray or even throws it on the floor. A lot of days it seems like more food ends up on the floor than in his mouth!"

Steve, the OT, says he appreciates how a mess can be extra work for moms and dads. He then points out that messy eating and playing with food are normal for children Jason's age. "Plus," Steve says, "feeding himself helps Jason work on tolerating textures, getting better with his thumb finger grasp, and coordination." Steve goes on to remind Stephanie how these early skills will grow and grow until Jason is doing school skills like holding a pencil or cutting with scissors. "Wow. I guess a little mess is worth it when you put it like that!" Stephanie says. She asks Steve to recommend foods that will help Jason continue to improve his fine motor skills.

Development of a skill in one area is related to and influences other developmental areas:

Social/Emotional:

- Demonstrates confidence in growing abilities.
- Demonstrates increasing independence.
- Plays near other toddlers and babies.

Physical:

- Uses body with increasing control.
- Uses fine and gross motor skills.
- Improves balance.

Communication/Literacy:

- Follows simple directives.
- Listens to songs and chants.

Cognitive:

- Follows pattern.
- Becomes aware of spatial terms like over, under, through.

DRESSING/UNDRESSING

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD: NONE

ISTAR-KR: Dressing/Undressing

Long before family members teach young children to dress and undress, clothing becomes a curiosity for children and therefore, something to explore. Dressing and undressing are excellent examples of how children learn by doing. Beginning skills of dressing can be demonstrated by older infants when they raise their arms to assist in putting on clothes or coats. And, it is not unusual to find older infants taking off their socks or booties and hats, and young toddlers successfully undressing. Having “dress-up” clothing to put on and take off is a favorite pretend play activity of older toddlers and preschool children. This activity builds personal care and hand skills, as well as cognitive and social skills.

Young Children are Learning When They:

- PC.3.1 Cooperate with dressing/undressing.
- PC.3.2 Assist with dressing/undressing.
- PC.3.3 Complete dressing/undressing.
- PC.3.4 Assist with daily needs (washing hands, toileting, brushing teeth, getting dressed).
- PC.3.5 Try putting on clothing.
- PC.3.6 Push away something not wanted.
- PC.3.7 Finds ways to maneuver around an obstacle that is in the way of obtaining something desired.
- PC.3.8 Notice that people wear different types of clothing depending on the weather.
- PC.3.9 Choose between two or more alternatives.
- PC.3.10 Increase independence and drive to master developing motor abilities.
- PC.3.11 Sequence recurring events (e.g., “After I eat breakfast, I get dressed”).
- PC.3.12 Describe daily routine (e.g., home and/or school).
- PC.3.13 Complete basic responsibilities related to daily needs.
- PC.3.14 Determine what type of clothing to wear based on the weather.
- PC.3.15 Apply movement concepts to specific movement situations (e.g., bend knees to put on socks, pants).

A child can be supported by an adult who:

- Supports individuality by providing choices whenever possible (e.g., “You have to change your shirt, but you can choose the red one or the green one”).
- Asks for the child’s help with daily tasks, and accepts their offer of help.
- Does for, does with, and watches as the child learns to do things independently.
- Teaches positional words when doing household tasks (“Please put your clothes inside the hamper/basket”).
- Talks about the sunshine or rain, the heat or the cold, and how to dress for weather.
- Talks about clothing choices with the child based on the weather.
- Dresses the child considering the temperature conditions inside and outside.
- Talks with the child about what is happening during the day and week.
- Provides a routine for the child.
- Helps the child learn to take off socks, shirts, and other clothing, encourage his labeling body parts, clothing, colors etc.

How it looks in everyday activities:

Darcy has just added some new clothing to the dress-up corner in her preschool classroom, hats, gloves, jackets, a letter sweater, large shirts, and some night gowns that have cut off, purses, costume jewelry and shoes. The girls and boys are curious about the new items. Quickly they take off their shoes and try some of the “new” shoes. Jonny puts on the “new” jeans jacket and the baseball hat and pretends to be a coach. He tries to get some other boys to be part of the play. The girls are interested in the “new” night gowns, which they call fancy dresses, and begin to prepare for going out to dinner. Nancy pulls a gown over her head, and sees that it is on backwards; she takes it off and tries again. She then tries on the ladies gloves, and some high heel shoes, and a hat, and finishes her ensemble with a bracelet.

Development of a skill in one area is related to and influences other developmental areas:

Social/Emotional:

- Demonstrates confidence in growing abilities.
- Demonstrates increasing independence.
- Plays near other toddlers and babies.

Physical:

- Uses body with increasing control.
- Uses fine and gross motor skills.
- Improves balance.

Communication/Literacy:

- Follows simple directives.
- Listens to songs and chants.

Cognitive:

- Follows pattern.
- Becomes aware of spatial terms like over, under, through.



CARE OF HANDS, FACE, NOSE

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD: NONE

ISTAR-KR: Care of hands, face, nose

Young children gradually learn how to take care of cleaning their hands, face and nose with lots of prompting, in clear directions/steps, with assistance and modeling from adults or other children. Young children can be overwhelmed by a Kleenex coming towards them out of nowhere to wipe at their nose or mouth. Being prompted to take control over this necessary task, may be motivating for some two and three old children, as they are shown the steps in taking care of their face and understand the expectations from adults. The older preschool child will be helped by the expectation of taking care of their body, again with prompts, consistent routines, and appropriate supports

Young Children are Learning When They:

- PC.4.1 Cooperate with personal care routines.
- PC.4.2 Assist in personal care routines.
- PC.4.3 Complete personal care routines.
- PC.4.4 Assist with daily needs (washing hands, toileting, brushing teeth).
- PC.4.5 Push away something not wanted.
- PC.4.6 Increase independence and drive to master developing motor abilities.
- PC.4.7 Show autonomy in self-care.
- PC.4.8 Demonstrate awareness of rules for safety.
- PC.4.9 Use adults as resources.
- PC.4.10 Show pride in physical/personal accomplishments.
- PC.4.11 Sequence recurring events (e.g., “Before I eat, I wash my hands, after I eat lunch I wash my face and hands).
- PC.4.12 Describe daily routine (e.g., home and/or school).
- PC.4.13 Complete basic responsibilities related to daily needs.
- PC.4.14 Apply movement concepts to specific movement situations (e.g., hold tissue over face, dry hands on toweling).
- PC.4.15 Identify and solve problems through active explorations.
- PC.4.16 Show a growing independence in hygiene, nutrition, and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth and toileting.

A child can be supported by an adult who:

- Asks for the child’s help with daily tasks, and accepts their offer of help.
- Does for, does with, and watches as the child learns to do things independently.
- Teaches positional words when doing household tasks (“Please put tissue into the garbage.”)
- Names items in the home and in the environment during nurturing routines.
- Describes environment with sensory words (e.g., hard/soft, rough/smooth, water/land).
- Rewards positive behaviors.
- Gives opportunities for self feeding, wiping the table, pouring etc.
- Provides a routine for the child.
- Takes photos of the child helping others, caring for her room, or taking care of daily needs and displays them around the room.
- Provides activities that strengthen hand grasp (e.g., squeezing clay and play dough, squeezing water out of sponges, using a hand held hole punch to punch holes in paper of various thickness).
- Provides instruction on proper hand washing and drying.

How it looks in everyday activities:

In Tonya's two's room, it is time to get ready for lunch. Children are following the directions to wash their hands before they sit down at the table. Katy, Eli, and Emma are the first three to get to the sink first. Katy squirts the soap onto her hands and begins to rub them together, rinses them and takes a paper towel to dry them. Eli is putting his hands in and out of the running water and is quickly finished and leaves the sink area before drying his hands. Emma is watching Katy and Eli. Tonya helps Emma.

All three children are working on the same personal care skill, and all are two years old, but each demonstrates different levels of mastery in washing their hands. Katy understands all the steps of hand-washing, Eli understands some of the steps, and Emma cooperates with Tonya to wash her hands.



Development of a skill in one area is related to and influences other developmental areas:

Social/Emotional:

- Demonstrates confidence in growing abilities.
- Demonstrates increasing independence.
- Plays near other toddlers and babies.

Physical:

- Uses body with increasing control.
- Uses fine and gross motor skills.
- Improves balance.

Communication/Literacy:

- Follows simple directives.
- Listens to songs and chants.

Cognitive:

- Follows pattern.
- Becomes aware of spatial terms like over, under, through.

TOILETING

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARD: NONE

ISTAR-KR: Toileting

Learning how to use the toilet takes physical control, emotional readiness, and cognitive understanding. Generally, preschool girls may learn to use the toilet before the male peers. But, both need motivation to be responsible for this personal care task. The physical steps of using the toilet can be taught, but the child must have physical control and cognitive skill to get them to the bathroom in time. Like any physical skill, this also requires practice. Achieving the skill of independent use of the toilet can be challenging when started too early, with too much pressure to be a Big Girl or Big Boy, and the alternative of remaining in diapers seems just fine with a child.

Young Children are Learning When They:

- PC.5.1 Demonstrate an awareness of physical elimination.
- PC.5.2 Participate in toileting.
- PC.5.3 Complete toileting independently.
- PC.5.4 Assist with daily needs (washing hands, toileting, brushing teeth, assisting with meal preparation).
- PC.5.5 Increase independence and drive to master developing motor abilities.
- PC.5.6 Describe daily routine (e.g., home and/or school).
- PC.5.7 Complete basic responsibilities related to daily needs.
- PC.5.8 Apply movement concepts to specific movement situations (e.g., bend knees to soften the landing and avoid obstacles in the path).
- PC.5.9 Follow rules for simple games and activities.
- PC.5.10 Show a growing independence in hygiene, nutrition, and personal care when eating, dressing, washing hands, brushing teeth, and toileting.
- PC.5.11 Indicate a wet or soiled diaper by pointing, vocalizing, or pulling at diaper when prompted.
- PC.5.12 Shows interest in toilet training and can use toilet regularly by 36 months, with assistance.

A child can be supported by an adult who:

- Allows time for the child to discuss behavior and circumstances.
- Develops positive rules with the child for understanding and ownership.
- Reward positive behaviors.
- Gives opportunities for self feeding, wiping the table, pouring etc.
- Provides a routine for the child.
- Takes photos of the child helping others, caring for her room, or taking care of daily needs and displays them around the room.
- Support child's efforts in toileting, brushing teeth, bathing, and washing hands.
- Show child how to clean up after self, acknowledging child when he/she does clean up.
- Provide child with enough time to take care of personal hygiene.

How it looks in everyday activities:

Three year old Rosie's favorite book right now is *Once Upon a Potty*. She is still wearing diapers, but is curious about the toilet and will ask for her diaper to be changed. Also, she wants to observe when her brother and sister use the toilet. Her parents and her preschool teacher are patient with her and review each step of learning to use the toilet and reassure her that one day she will be ready to practice using the toilet, too. At preschool some of her peers are using the potty with assistance, and she has agreed to try one day soon.

Her parents have decided that changing her diaper in the bathroom makes sense to further reinforce that is where she will use the potty one day. Sometimes, before putting on a new diaper, she asks to sit on the potty. Also, when it is time to dress or undress, Rosie's parents encourage her to do as much as possible, talking about each step in the process, and they make sure her pants are easy to pull down and up.

Development of a skill in one area is related to and influences other developmental areas:

Social/Emotional:

- Demonstrates confidence in growing abilities.
- Demonstrates increasing independence.

Physical:

- Uses body with increasing control.
- Uses fine and gross motor skills.
- Improves balance.

Communication/Literacy:

- Follows simple directives.

Cognitive:

- Follows pattern.
- Becomes aware of spatial terms like over, under, through.