



2024 Australian Early Development Census

About the AEDC domains

What are the AEDC domains?

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide census of early child development that shows how young children have developed as they start their first year of full-time school. The AEDC highlights what is working well and what needs to be improved or developed to support children and their families.

As they enter their first year of full-time school, a research 'snapshot' of a child's development is taken when a school teacher completes the Australian version of the Early Development Instrument.

This measures five important areas, or domains, of early childhood development:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

The following table provides a description of each of the five domains in relation to children who would be considered 'developmentally on track', 'developmentally at risk' or 'developmentally vulnerable'.

To learn more about the AEDC, visit www.aedc.gov.au.

Table 1: AEDC domain descriptors






Domain	Children developmentally on track	Children developmentally at risk	Children developmentally vulnerable
Physical health and wellbeing 	<p>Almost never have problems that interfere with their ability to physically cope with the school day. These children are generally independent, have excellent motor skills, and have energy levels that can get them through the school day.</p>	<p>Experience some challenges that interfere with their ability to physically cope with the school day. This may include being dressed inappropriately, frequently late, hungry or tired. Children may also show poor coordination skills, have poor fine and gross motor skills, or show poor to average levels of energy levels during the school day.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges that interfere with their ability to physically cope with the school day. This may include being dressed inappropriately, frequently late, hungry or tired. Children are usually clumsy and may have fading energy levels.</p>

Table 1 (continued): AEDC domain descriptors

Domain	Children developmentally on track	Children developmentally at risk	Children developmentally vulnerable
Social competence 	<p>Almost never have problems getting along, working, or playing with other children; is respectful to adults, is self-confident, and is able to follow class routines; and is capable of helping others.</p>	<p>Experience some challenges in the following areas: getting along with other children and teachers, playing with a variety of children in a cooperative manner, showing respect for others and for property, following instructions and class routines, taking responsibility for their actions, working independently, and exhibiting self-control and self-confidence.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges with poor overall social skills. For example children who do not get along with other children on a regular basis, do not accept responsibility for their own actions and have difficulties following rules and class routines. Children may be disrespectful of adults, children, and others' property; have low self-confidence and self-control, do not adjust well to change; and are usually unable to work independently.</p>
Emotional maturity 	<p>Almost never show aggressive, anxious, or impulsive behaviour. Children will have good concentration and will often help other children.</p>	<p>Experience some challenges in the following areas: helping other children who are hurt, sick or upset, inviting other children to join in activities, being kind to other children, and waiting their turn in activities. They will sometimes experience problems with anxious behaviours, aggressive behaviour, temper tantrums, or problems with inattention or hyperactivity.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges related to emotional regulation. For example problems managing aggressive behaviour being prone to disobedience and/or is easily distracted, inattentive, and impulsive. Children will usually not help others and are sometimes upset when left by their caregiver.</p>
Language and cognitive skills (school-based) 	<p>Children will be interested in books, reading and writing, and basic math; capable of reading and writing simple sentences and complex words. Will be able to count and recognise numbers and shapes.</p>	<p>Have mastered some but not all of the following literacy and numeracy skills: being able to identify some letters and attach sounds to some letters, show awareness of rhyming words, know writing directions, being able to write their own name, count to 20, recognise shapes and numbers, compare numbers, sort and classify, and understand simple time concepts. Children may have difficulty remembering things, and show a lack of interest in books, reading, maths and numbers, and may not have mastered more advanced literacy skills such as reading and writing simple words or sentences.</p>	<p>Experience a number of challenges in reading/writing and with numbers; unable to read and write simple words, will be uninterested in trying, and often unable to attach sounds to letters. Children will have difficulty remembering things, counting to 20, and recognising and comparing numbers; and usually not interested in numbers.</p>
Communication skills and general knowledge 	<p>Children will have excellent communication skills, can tell a story and communicate easily with both children and adults, and have no problems with articulation.</p>	<p>Have mastered some but not all of the following communication skills: listening, understanding and speaking effectively in English, being able to articulate clearly, being able to tell a story and to take part in imaginative play. Children may not know some basic general knowledge about the world such as knowing that leaves fall in autumn, apple is fruit, and dogs bark.</p>	<p>Children will have poor communication skills and articulation; have limited command of English (or the language of instruction), have difficulties talking to others, understanding, and being understood; and have poor general knowledge.</p>