

Early Years Support Tool

Guidance for Completing the Small Steps Tool

When completing the Small Steps Tool, please ensure you highlight what the child can do **independently**, without adult support. This will provide a more accurate representation of the child's current achievements.

- The **Key Indicator** should be highlighted once the child has **securely achieved** the statement.
- If the child is **working towards** the Key Indicator, the **Small Steps** section must be completed to outline their progress and next steps.

This tool should be used **in conjunction with** the *Ordinarily Available Inclusive Practice (OAIP)* and The Graduated Approach Toolkit document to further support the identification and planning of appropriate strategies to meet the individual needs of the child.

Personal, Social and Emotional

Breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps
(Links to Social, Emotional & Mental Health within the OAIP)

Key Indicator		Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning		
Step 1 0-3mths	I enjoy the company of others and seek contact with others from birth.	I can hold eye contact briefly (5 seconds or more) during interactions with a familiar person.	I can communicate using a range of emotions through sounds, facial expressions and moving my body.	When someone talks to me or smiles, I look at their face and move my arms and legs. I feel happy when I hear a familiar voice or when someone holds me close.
Step 2 2-5mths	I recognise and I am most responsive to my main carer; my face brightens, activity increases when my familiar carer appears.	I respond when spoken to, for example, I move my arms and legs, change facial expression, move my body and make mouth movements.	When I am upset, I feel better when someone cuddles me, rocks me, or talks or sings to me in a soft voice.	I hold eye contact during interactions with a familiar person.
Step 3 4-7mths	I show attachment to special people, for example by showing signs of distress we are separated, staying close to them and showing affection.	I laugh and gurgle at familiar care givers. I lift my arms in anticipation of being picked up by familiar care giver.	I like cuddles and being held, for example, I will calm, snuggles in, smile and gazes at my carer's face or strokes their skin.	I show pleasure at the return of familiar carer.
Step 4 6-10mths	I am beginning to show emotional responses to other people's emotions, for example, I smile when smiled at.	I get upset when I hear another child crying. I draw others into social interactions through vocalisations, crying, babbling and smiling.	I make my own sounds when spoken to, especially when a smiling face is used by familiar carers.	I am building relationships with special people, for example, by showing affection or holding your attention by vocalising.
Step 5 9-13mths	I am responsive to a familiar care giver when they direct attention to objects by looking and pointing.	I beginning to show awareness and a preference for familiar caregivers.	I point to draw other people's attention to things of interest. I enjoy finding my nose, eyes or tummy as part of a naming game.	I show interest in the activities of others and respond differently to children and adults, for example, I may be more interested in watching children than adults or may pay more attention when children talk to me.
Step 6 12-16mths	I can show a preference for certain people and toys.	I use a familiar adult for 'emotional refuelling' when I am feeling tired, stressed or frustrated, for example, I stop playing to have a cuddle or sit quietly snuggled on your lap for a few minutes.	I cling to a special person and hide my face when feeling scared or overwhelmed. I am wary of strangers.	I get distressed and anxious if left somewhere without a familiar adult. I am comforted by a toy or object to help me calm.
Step 7 15-19mths	I demonstrate a sense of self as an individual. I am beginning to be aware my own feelings, wants and needs.	I seek an available adult to help achieve a goal, for example, to get an object that's out of reach or activate a wind-up toy.	I express emotions and seek connections from an adult, for example, I may cry at a minor injury and seek comfort. I want to do things independently and may "No" to adult.	I react to an audience, for example, I will repeat an activity or action which is received positively by a smile, or which is laughed at, applauded or cheered.

		I use my voice or gesture to refuse, for example, by pushing object away, or my shaking head.		I am aware of other's feelings, for example, I will look concerned if I hear crying or look excited if I hear a familiar happy voice.
Step 8 18-22mths	I like to explore and play in independently, but I come back to an adult for a cuddle if I feel unsure or need comfort.	I can tolerate brief separation from special people. I explore new toys and environments, but I will look back to you regularly to 'check in'.	I like playing by myself. I am happy for an adult to help me if needed and give me ideas to extend my play. I respond to a small number of boundaries with encouragement and support.	I play ball games cooperatively with an adult, for example, I may kick or roll the ball back and forth.
Step 9 21-25mths	I am beginning to seek out others to share experiences.	I am beginning to show affection towards others. I am beginning to initiate social interaction especially with a special person to get my wants and needs met.	I play alongside others, and I am beginning to show an interest in their play by watching. I will play next to my peers. I might find it challenging to be in a large group.	I begin to engage in simple pretend play. I follow play by imitating the actions of others with an adult supporting me.
Step 10 24-31mths	I am beginning to show some understanding of boundaries and routines.	I respond to a small number of boundaries, with encouragement and support. I want to do things independently and will say no to an adult.	I participate and help with familiar routines with help from adults, for example, washing my hands for snack, setting the table or putting away toys.	I am beginning to realise some things are to be shared and some things belong to others.
Step 11 30-36mths	I am kind and friendly. I like to talk to other children and adults I know and form good relationships with them.	I can seek out others to share experiences. I can form a special friendship with another child.	I can take turns in a conversation but find it hard to stay on topic. I understand that I need to share and take turns but might not always be willing to do so.	I can let another child join in my play, and I like to talk to them while we play, using things I've learned before. I like playing with others and working together to have fun and share ideas.
Step 12 35-41mths	I show independence in selecting and carrying out activities.	Sometimes I don't want to do something, or I get upset when things don't go my way. I like to try tricky things, like climbing or building, when a grown-up is nearby to keep me safe.	I enjoy the responsibility of carrying out small tasks such as carrying a bag back from the shops.	I like being with adults. I go to them when I want to learn something, need a cuddle, or want to play together.

Step 13 40-51mths	I show curiosity about others, and I am beginning to adapt my behaviour to suit different social situations and routines. I am developing independence in managing my own self-care needs, such as washing hands, putting on shoes, or choosing appropriate clothing.	I am beginning to understand that my actions can affect others. I may show empathy by becoming upset or offer comfort when I realise, I have caused upset. I actively seek out opportunities to share with others. I am beginning to understand the importance of turn-taking and fairness in play and social interactions. I am more outgoing with unfamiliar people and more confident in social situations.	I know who I am and what I'm good at. I feel proud of myself, and I like it when people say, 'well done!'. I can express my wishes and needs clearly and understands when these are not immediately met. I can independently manage some self-care routines such as washing and drying my hands. I select and use activities and resources independently.	I show care and concern for others, for living things and the environment. I enjoy joining in with family customs and routines and I am curious about others. I show concern for others who are distressed and will seek to comfort my peers.
Step 14 50-60+ mths	I work well in a group or class, taking turns and sharing fairly. I can follow the rules and boundaries of the setting.	I understand the need for rules and know right from wrong. I behave appropriately in different situations. I will try to negotiate solutions when there is conflict in my play. I can engage in rule-based games that involve sharing and turn taking.	I understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs, which need to be treated with respect. I understand that I need to consider other's needs, views, cultures and beliefs. I understand that my actions affect other people.	I am confident in seeking comfort, reassurance and help from special people. I enjoy talking about past experiences, the present and future. I can take part in pretend play and take on different roles.

Communication

Breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps
(Links to Communication & Interaction within the OAIP)

Key Indicator		Small Steps to the child achieving the Key Indicator		
Step 1 0-3mths	I like to hear familiar voices and may smile, calm or look towards you.	I will cry to express my needs, for example, when I am hungry or in discomfort.	When I feel calm and happy, I make little sounds like cooing and gurgling.	I will show a response to sound and light by stilling or turning.
Step 2 2-5mths	I will show that I enjoy interactions by smiling, making movements and creating vocalisations.	I will make sounds in response to you talking to me, for example, 'ooh' 'ah'.	I will turn my head towards a familiar voice from across the room.	I recognise and feel calm by familiar voices and people.
Step 3 4-7mths	I will begin to make eye contact when you speak to me and 'take turns' in babbling conversations.	I will look carefully at a person talking to me.	I will turn and respond to familiar voice. I will stop communicating if the speaker turns away.	I will respond to the changes in the tone of your voice. I will begin to babble by repeating a series of the same sounds, for example, 'ba,ba,ba', 'ma,ma,ma'.
Step 4 6-10mths	I use my voice or gestures to get an adult's attention, and my babble sounds repeat a series of the same sound such as 'mama' 'baba'.	I am beginning to experiment with and enjoy my vocalisations, changing my pitch and volume (rise and fall sound). I will use my voice or gesture to attract attention, ask for things or refusal.	My sounds are tuneful, and I use sing song vowel sounds.	I don't just make sounds with my mouth; I also move my hands like I'm talking with them too. I will move my whole body to sounds such as music, rhymes and a regular beat.
Step 5 9-13mths	I can respond to simple questions in familiar context with a special person, by pointing to objects or people, for example, Where's your nose? Where's Mummy?	I will respond to my own name by turning or looking up at whoever said my name. I am beginning to follow body language such as pointing.	I can recognise some family names, for example, Mummy, Daddy, Brothers, Sisters etc.	I will copy signs/gestures, for example, bye-bye, all gone.
Step 6 12-16mths	I can frequently imitate words and sounds	Sometimes I use some sounds that are becoming words, for example, mumum, tedee	To get your attention I will make a sound, point and look towards to you. I use sounds instead of words to represent different objects, for example, 'brmm' for car, 'yum' for dinner, 'dodi' for dummy	I respond to familiar words and short sentences based on familiar routines, for example. I will run to the door when an adult holds keys and says "It's time to go".
Step 7 15-19mths	I can recognise and point to familiar objects when you ask me a simple question.	I can understand and select a familiar object when you give me a choice of two.	I will participate with action rhymes and will join in with some movement, action and vocalisations.	I can ask for my favourite games like 'peek a boo' by saying 'boo' or use single words to comment on what I can see, for example, 'bird' if I see one in the garden.

		When asked I can show you simple body parts on myself by pointing to them, for example, my hair, eyes, ears, nose.	I love to babble conversationally (sometimes called jargon) and use a range of adult like speech sounds.	
Step 8 18-22mths	I am beginning to make myself more understood to others and can become frustrated if they don't know what I mean.	When I play with my toys, I am enjoying myself so much that I don't always hear when you talk to me.	I am enjoying my world and starting to enjoy simple pretend play, for example, pretending to talk on the phone.	I can understand up to 15 words.
Step 9 21-25mths	I can say around 20 words. I may say them in my own way, but the words are usually consistent in how they sound.	I can fill in the missing word in a story or rhyme, for example, Humpty Dumpty sat on a	I can understand different situations. I am able to follow routine, events and activities using non-verbal cues.	I use words or gestures to ask for help.
Step 10 24-31mths	I understand simple instructions involving two people or objects such as 'Get mummy's shoes' or 'Find Jacobs car'.	I learn new words very rapidly and use them when communicating with other people. I can shift my attention to a different task if you gain my full attention by saying my name.	I show sustained engagement and interaction when sharing a picture story book with an adult. I understand the use of objects, for example, if asked 'What do we use to cut things?'	I can understand a variety of question words, for example, 'what' 'where' 'who'.
Step 11 30-36mths	I can listen to others in group situations when conversations interest me.	I can re-tell a simple past event in correct order, for example, 'Went down slide and hurt finger'	I can talk about the ownership of things, for example, my teddy, your book, the man's car. I talk about my own life and my favourite things.	I know my full name. I can recite all or part of a simple nursery rhyme.
Step 12 35-41mths	I can use a range of tenses, for example, 'play', 'playing', 'will play' and 'played'.	I use sentences with more than 3 words. I am easily understood by a range of people.	I use pronouns correctly, for example, 'I', 'me' , 'you'.	I understand positional words such as 'in' and 'on', for example I can carry out the action 'Put dolly in the box'.
Step 13 40-51mths	I use language to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next in a familiar situation.	I am beginning to use language for pretending and organising play, for example, 'You be the Mum and I'll be the baby'.	I can retell stories in the correct sequence drawing on language patterns of stories, for example, 'Once upon a time'.	I understand 'when' and 'why'. I talk about what might happen next in a familiar situation.

Step 14 50-60+ mths	I can adapt language to the needs of the listener.	I can produce most speech sounds, although may have some difficulty with consonant blends, for example, 'tr' in tree and 'bl' in blue.	I show an understanding of the elements of stories, for example, the main character, sequence of events and the story beginning and end.	I ask 'why' frequently and consider other people's reply.
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Physical

Breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps
(Links to Physical/Sensory Development within OAIP)

Key Indicator		Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning		
Step 1 0-3mths	I am starting to look around with my eyes and trying to turn my head.	I can turn my head to the side when placed on my tummy. I open my mouth to feed when the corner of mouth is touched.	I have strong suckling with rhythmic coordinated swallowing. I can lift my head clear of ground.	I look steadily at things for short periods (5 seconds or more).
Step 2 2-5mths	I am beginning to have some control over my body movements such as rolling from my back to my front.	I can control my head when supported in an upright position; my head does not flop forwards or backwards.	When lying on my tummy I can lift my head up and using my forearms to support me. I use movement and my senses to focus on, reach for and grasp objects.	I can bring my hands to my mouth to explore them. I like watching my hand movements.
Step 3 4-7mths	I can roll over in most directions. I am most motivated to do this when toys are placed nearby, and I think I can reach them.	I close my hand firmly on objects placed in my palm. I pick up and explore objects by holding them to my mouth.	When I am lying on my back, I lift my legs in a vertical position and grasp my feet. I may be able to sit for a short period with support.	I can hold on to your finger when lying on the floor and pull myself up right.
Step 4 6-10mths	I can move from a lying down to a sitting position by myself.	I can sit by myself without support. When sitting, I can lean forward to pick up small toys.	I pass toys from one hand to another. I will use my fingers to rake food towards me.	I can move from a sitting position to my hands and knees. I move around the floor by wriggling.
Step 5 9-13mths	I can pull to stand by holding furniture or a person to support.	I move around continuously by crawling, bottom shuffling or rolling. I can hold my own bottle or sipper cup. I open my mouth for a spoon.	I can pick up small objects between my thumb and fingers. I enjoy exploring in damp sand, paste or paint. I throw toys or objects deliberately.	I stretch out with one hand to grasp a toy if it is offered. I can let go of things, to drop something or give it to you. I can reach and grab a moving object by moving towards where the object will go.
Step 6 12-16mths	I can walk with shorter steps and legs closer together, no longer needing to hold my arms up to balance.	I can walk around furniture lifting one foot and stepping sideways (cruising). I can walk with one or both hands held by adult. I take my first few steps; my feet wide apart, uneven steps, arms raised for balance.	I can grasp finger foods and brings them to my mouth. I attempt to use a spoon and other utensils. I can guide it towards my mouth, but food often falls off.	I hold an object in each hand and bring them together in the middle, for example, banging two blocks together. I hold a pen or crayon using a whole hand (palmar) grasp and scribble with different strokes. I can build a tower of 2 blocks.

Step 7 15-19mths	I may start to become aware of wet or soiled nappy or pants. I show this through gestures or body language.	I can walk up steps holding hand of adult. I am beginning to show awareness of what toilet/potty is used for. I can take off easily removable clothes, for example, socks.	I can come downstairs backwards on my knees (crawling). I can climb up and down from chairs/couch.	I have developed my own likes and dislikes in food and drink. I will accept new textures and tastes and may refuse food or drink I dislike. I will feed myself finger foods and will try to use a spoon.
Step 8 18-22mths	I am starting to help with dressing and hygiene routine, for example, I will hold my arm out when shown my coat, lift my foot when shown my shoe.	I can hold a cup with both hands without much spilling anything.	I have an awareness of where clothes are kept. I can get onto a child's chair by myself without assistance either backwards or sideways.	I can brush my own hair. I can kick a large ball.
Step 9 21-25mths	I am beginning to imitate drawing simple shapes such as lines and circles.	I can, squat to play, and rise without support. This supports me to make large gross motor movements.	I can make gross motor movements with resources such as chalks / paint brushes on the floor and walls using my full arm.	I watch adults draw shapes and attempts to copy them.
Step 10 24-31mths	I am developing my fine motor skills and independence in self-care. I can build with blocks, turn pages in a book, and manage simple fastenings like zips and Velcro. I am also learning to take off my coat or shirt when it is undone.	I can build a tower of up to 6 blocks	I can take off loose coat or shirt when undone I can turn pages in a book one at a time	I can unzip front zipper on coat or jacket I can undo Velcro fasteners
Step 11 30-36mths	I can catch a large ball.	I can walk downstairs safely, 2 feet to each step whilst carrying a toy. I can stand on one foot when shown.	I can pull up own trousers, pulls up zipper. I can throw a large ball with purpose.	I can undo large buttons. I can jump forward 2 feet.
Step 12 35-41mths	I can hold a pencil between my thumb and two fingers; I am no longer using whole hand grasp.	I can make snips in paper with child scissors.	I can use a rolling pin and cutters to shape playdough, showing control and awareness of tool use.	I can screw and unscrew toy nuts and bolts.

Step 13 40-51mths	I can handle tools, objects, and malleable materials safely with increasing control.	I can use one-handed tools and equipment, for example, making snips in paper with scissors.	I can hold a paintbrush with a steady grip and paint mostly within a defined space.	I can use my knife and fork independently. I can scoop sand into a bucket and pour water into containers with minimal spillage.
Step 14 50-60+ mths	I understand the importance of keeping healthy and things that contribute to this.	During snack time, I will choose fruit over biscuits and say 'Fruit helps me grow strong!'.	I will remind a peer to wash their hands before eating, showing an awareness of hygiene and healthy choices.	I can take responsibility for my self-care in washing, teeth cleaning and toileting. I can dress and undress independently.

Thinking – breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps

Breaking down the key indicators into smaller more achievable steps

(Links to Cognition & Learning within OAIP)

Key Indicator		Small Steps to incorporate the environment, role of the adult and effective planning		
Step 1 0-3mths	I show interest in new experiences – for example, when you show me a new toy.	I can move a hanging rattle or soft toy while moving my arms and legs.	When I am lying on back or propped up, I move my eyes to follow a face or toy, moving them side to side.	I turn my eyes and/or head to a new sound. I am startled by sudden noise.
Step 2 2-5mths	I do things again and again when they make something happen, like kicking a toy to make it move or shaking a rattle to hear the sound.	I show an interest in small objects or the detail of a toy. I react with sudden behaviour changes when a face or object disappears suddenly from view.	I look around a room with interest; visually scanning the environment for new and interesting objects and events. I smile with pleasure at recognisable playthings.	I show an interest in moving pictures and sound such as on the television. I can shift visual attention by looking from one object to another and back again.
Step 3 4-7mths	I get excited when I know something nice is going to happen, like when I see my spoon at mealtime or hear the sounds before feeding. I smile or move when I see my favourite toy or play a fun game.	I play with and explore objects by touching them, looking at them, bringing them to the mouth and listening to the sounds they make.	I persistently and deliberately reach out for toys.	I can notice change in groupings of objects, pictures and sounds, for example, I may look puzzled, unsettled or stop what I am doing.
Step 4 6-10mths	I watch toys being hidden and try to find it.	I play with objects by banging, shaking and turning them around in their hands.	I react to familiar sounds or sights by changes in behaviour, for example, extending my arms and legs, smiling, searching with my eyes when I hear the vacuum, running bath, footsteps.	I show interest in toys and other things that incorporate technology. I can release a toy from my grasp if my attention is disturbed.
Step 5 9-13mths	I may struggle to get objects that are out of reach and pull a mat towards me to make a toy or object come closer.	I show excitement during turn taking games such as peek a boo by clapping my hands together as my turn grows closer. I look towards the floor if an object is dropped.	I explore new objects in an orderly way to investigate cause and effect. I understand the meaning of some sounds, for example, when I hear the telephone ring I look at the phone.	I anticipate what happens next in my day, for example, I get ready for food when I sit in my highchair, and I might get upset if things don't happen like I expect. I imitate and improvise actions I have observed, for example, clapping or waving.
Step 6 12-16mths	I engage in simple pretend play with soft toys, for example, I will hug and kiss teddy or pretend to be asleep by covering myself with a blanket and close my eyes.	I am beginning to know there are different ways to play with different toys, for example, a ball is for throwing/rolling and a car is for pushing.	I am interested in things that go together, for example, a cup and a saucer. I recognise favourite toys/games, for example, if I see a character in a book or I	I can experiment, for example, if two things don't fit together one way then I will try another way.

		I know that one thing can go inside another, like putting a toy in a box or a cup inside a bowl.	may bring you the same toy for you to play with.	
Step 7 15-19mths	I can match shapes and put them in the right holes, like when I use a shape sorter	I can remember where objects belong. I am beginning to explore fitting shapes into spaces.	I beginning to notice differences in shape and size, for example, I am beginning to notice if a shape is too big to fit into the space.	I use cups or boxes that fit inside each other or stack.
Step 8 18-22mths	I can demonstrate early problem-solving, curiosity, and communication through exploration and problem solving.	I can find pieces that go together, like putting a lid on a pot or joining two blocks that fit. I know what to do when something might fall. I try to stop my tower from wobbling by making it straight again.	I can show curiosity of how things work. I am interested in pulling/pushing things. I can build simple structures.	I show interest in toys with buttons, flaps and simple mechanisms. I can ask for a desired object by pointing, which may be accompanied by vocalisations and single words, checking back to the adult that request has been noticed.
Step 9 21-25mths	I can operate mechanical toys, for example, turns the knob on a wind-up toy, pull back a friction car and push buttons to open a flap.	I show an interest in technological toys with knobs or pulleys, or real objects such as cameras or mobile phones.	I engage in open-ended activities and show curiosity about objects and how they work.	I try to work out problems by thinking first, for example, how to switch something on/off.
Step 10 24-31mths	I can complete simple puzzle board.	I can find things that are the same, like two red cars or two spoons that match. I explore puzzle pieces through play, for example, I will pick up and handle puzzle pieces, showing interest in their shapes and colours.	I will have a go at completing an inset puzzle, trying to place pieces in different spaces without matching, showing curiosity.	I am beginning to match shapes or pictures and notice when a piece looks similar to a space and attempt to match it.
Step 11 30-36mths	I am beginning to show an interest in the world around me, including how things work, and how to operate simple equipment.	I seek to learn basic skills in turning on some ICT equipment. I engage in imaginative play and role play based on my own experiences. I show curiosity about the world by asking questions and thinking about reasons why things happen.	I can copy what others do and join in with activities when I watch someone show me first. I learn by watching and trying things out for myself. I enjoy playing with small world models such as the farm, garage and trains.	I use and understands the logic of 'if' and 'then' for example 'if I stand on the step then I can reach the toy'.
Step 12 35-41mths	I can draw a person with a head and one or two other features or parts.	I understand that drawings can stand for real people or objects.	I know that people have distinct parts (head, arms, legs, etc.)	I show pride in my work and will name the parts as I drew them.
Step 13 40-51mths	I can concentrate and listen for more than ten minutes in adult-led activities that I enjoy.	I can show interest in different occupations and ways of life. I remember three or four items shown on a list, for example a shopping list – oranges, apples and bananas.	I can comment and asks questions about where they live and the natural world. I can maintain attention during interactions and activities.	I can ignore distractions and concentrate on a chosen task. I can listen to spoken language and respond appropriately.

Step 14 50-60+ mths	I show flexibility in trying different ways of tackling problems.	I can select the tools and techniques I need to shape, assemble and join materials I am using. I can explain my own knowledge and understanding and ask appropriate questions of others.	I can find out about and identify the use of everyday technology. I can use information and communication technology, and programmable toys to support my learning.	I can make short-term plans. I can find out about my environment and talk about the features that I like and dislike.
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