

101

ESSENTIAL

LISTS

FOR THE EARLY YEARS

PENNY TASSONI



**101 ESSENTIAL LISTS
FOR THE EARLY YEARS**

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: Starting Out	1
1 Reasons to work with children	1
2 Your essential kit	2
3 Jobs for first thing in the morning	3
4 Making your life easier	4
5 Things that can go wrong	5
6 Confidentiality and data protection	6
7 Websites, books and magazines	7
CHAPTER 2: Layout and Organization	9
8 Getting a good routine	9
9 Morning and home time	10
10 Managing snacks and toilets	11
11 Encouraging healthy eating	12
12 Getting children to do some of the work	14
13 Ordering toys and equipment	15
14 Providing varied opportunities	16
15 The sand tray	17
16 The water tray	18
17 The dough table	19
18 The role-play area	20
19 The construction area	21
20 Coping with paint	22
21 Organizing outdoor play	23
22 Going on outings	24
CHAPTER 3: Planning	26
23 Getting down to planning	26
24 Different types of planning	28

25	Using themes	29
CHAPTER 4: Ideas for Activities		30
26	Failsafe activities for mathematics	30
27	Developing speaking and listening abilities	32
28	Encouraging pre-reading skills	33
29	Making writing fun	34
30	Easy ICT for 3–5s	35
31	Activities for outdoors	36
32	Getting creative	38
33	Favourite books	39
34	Favourite nursery rhymes	40
CHAPTER 5: Working with Children		41
35	Settling in children	41
36	Tips for filling spare moments	42
37	Praise and rewards	43
38	Bites, smacks and grabs!	44
39	Preventing tantrums	45
40	Dealing with tantrums	46
41	Using puppets	47
42	Helping children to concentrate	48
43	Building confidence and independence	49
44	Listening to children	50
45	Coping with Christmas	51
CHAPTER 6: Observation and Assessment		52
46	Reasons for observing children	52
47	A quick tour of observation methods	53
48	How and what to observe	55
49	Know your milestones	57
50	Sharing information with parents	58

51	Writing records	59
52	Tips to make record-keeping easier	60
CHAPTER 7: Parents		61
53	Reasons to work with parents	61
54	Understanding the pressures on parents	62
55	Showing new parents around	63
56	Home visits	64
57	Settling in parents	65
58	Keeping in contact with parents	66
59	Information evenings and open days	67
60	Moans and complaints	68
61	Encouraging parents to help out	69
62	Fundraising and social events	70
CHAPTER 8: Special Needs and Inclusion		71
63	Inclusion – common questions	71
64	Early identification	72
65	Drawing up an individual education plan	73
66	Tips to help children with learning difficulties	74
67	Watching out for hearing loss	75
68	Working with children who have hearing loss	76
69	Identifying and helping children with visual impairment	77
70	Dealing with attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD)	78
71	Understanding speech and language difficulties	79
72	Support, websites and resources	81
CHAPTER 9: Staying Safe		82
73	Signs of child abuse	82
74	Keeping children safe from abusers	84

75	Signs of illness in children	85
76	When to get emergency treatment	86
77	Basic first-aid	88
78	Preventing cross infection	89
79	Combating headlice	90
80	Dealing with threadworms	91
81	Filling out accident books	92
82	Your own back care	93
CHAPTER 10: Coping with Management and Inspection		94
83	Top tips for managing people	94
84	Top ten staff problems	95
85	Listening and learning	96
86	Delegating	97
87	Making meetings work	98
88	Working with assistants and volunteers	99
89	Using students effectively	100
90	Preparing for inspection	102
91	Keeping up the standards	103
92	Coping with inspection	104
CHAPTER 11: Moving On		105
93	Making the most of training	105
94	Creating opportunities	107
95	Networking effectively	108
96	Where to look for a job	109
97	How to get an interview	110
98	Preparing for interviews	111
99	Answering questions at interviews	112
100	Top tips for a good interview	113
101	Considering your options	115

Starting Out

1

LIST 1

Reasons to work with children

- It's not boring – the job may be demanding and tiring, but there's always something happening.
- You might make a difference – children are heavily influenced by who they are with. Your interest and care is making a difference.
- It's fun – if you provide interesting activities and actually join in with them, you will enjoy yourself. What other job allows you to play with sand, water and dough, as well as do some dressing up?
- You face and survive challenges – cleaning up grazes, coping with anxious parents and separating brawling children are all just part of the job!
- The laughter and smiles keep coming – it takes relatively little to impress young children, and the beam of a toddler is worth getting up for!
- There are huge opportunities within the sector – it's easy to move jobs and change direction.
- It's a job where you are constantly learning – new initiatives, new children and new parents.

LIST 2

Your essential kit

There are some things you need to have handy when working with children. One minute you might be wiping a nose, another you might be writing a message to a parent.

For accidents, snotty noses and sticky hands

- Tissues or toilet roll
- Wipes
- Plastic bags
- Cloth
- Accident book
- Disposable gloves
- First-aid kit.

For practical activities

- Sticky tape, masking tape and scissors
- Pencil, felt-tip pens
- Pritt-style glue
- Eraser, ruler and pencil sharpener
- Teddy, puppet or cuddly toy
- Apron.

For observations and quick notes to parents

- Pen
- Notepad
- Digital camera (providing that consent has been obtained from parents beforehand).

Bits and bobs

- Swiss Army Knife with a screwdriver – keep it tucked away in a handbag or cupboard.
- Finger puppet – comes in handy when comforting children who have had an accident, or ‘wobbly’ new children.
- Dance tape or CD – always useful for wet days and long afternoons.

LIST 3

Jobs for first thing in the morning

Getting organized first thing in the morning can make a difference to the rest of the day. If you have any students or helpers, give them this list too!

- Put on some music.
- Open a window slightly.
- Look at the planner while it's quiet. Prepare any paperwork for helpers, letters for parents, etc.
- Fill the water tray and put out the toys.
- Rake and sieve the sand. Put out the toys. Check that the dustpan and brush are out.
- Put out the dough or make fresh dough. Put out the toys.
- Set out the role-play area, with props. Hang up any garments.
- Lay out three or four jigsaws on a table, and start to make one of them.
- Prepare the painting area. Put out paper, paints and brushes. Check that a cloth is available.
- Check that aprons are available for paint, sand and water.
- Arrange the book corner. Put some books on display and plump up the cushions.
- Set out the collage and writing areas. Put out fresh glue, spreaders, paper and a range of materials.
- Get out the construction toys and maybe begin making something for the children to finish.
- Put out some types of small world play, e.g. a train set, farm animals, doll's house.
- Prepare other planned activities.
- Go outside and check for litter, damage or animal mess.
- Once back inside, check the toilet area.
- Breathe deeply, relax and start the day with a smile!

LIST 4

Making your life easier

Working with children can be stressful and demanding, so it's essential to find ways of reducing the hassle factor.

Be organized!

- Try and be as tidy as possible and encourage children to be too!
- Use labels, lists and noticeboards.
- Store planning notes on a computer so that you can tweak them for another year.

Accept help

- Make it a priority to get volunteers in to help.
- Give volunteers fulfilling tasks.
- Develop their expertise in dealing with particular activities or children.
- Make sure that other people understand the way you have organized the room and set things out.
- Teach children how to put out equipment and to set up activities. Time spent teaching them how to be self-reliant will be paid back in bucket loads.

Pace yourself

- Think about the hassle factor involved in activities. Make sure that you have a mix of 'low' and 'high hassle' activities.
- When you're doing your long-term planning, think about how tired you (and the children) might be at certain points in the term.
- Make sure that you build in enough time to have a proper break each day. Be still and quiet and take the time to recharge a little.
- Finally, remember that you don't have to be perfect. The world will not end because the dough is too sticky!