

Examples of schemas

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Schemas are patterns of repeatable behaviour which can often be noticed in young children's play.

Examples of easily identifiable schemas

| <i>Schema</i> | <i>Description of possible behaviours</i> |
|---|---|
| Transporting | A child may carry all the bricks from one place to another in a bag, the sand from the tray to the home corner in a bucket, push a friend around in a toy pram. |
| Enveloping | A child may cover themselves in a flannel when washing, wrap dolls and toys up in blankets and fabric, and cover their painting with one colour. |
| Enclosure/containing | A child may put their thumb in and out of their mouth, fill up and empty containers of all kinds, climb into large cartons, sit in the tunnel, build 'cages' with blocks. |
| Trajectory - Diagonal, vertical or horizontal | A child may gaze at your face, drop things from their cot, make arcs in their spilt food with their hand, play with the running water in the bathroom, climb up and jump off furniture, line up the cars, bounce and kick balls, throw. |
| Rotation | A child may be fascinated by the spinning washing machine, love anything with wheels, roll down a hill, enjoy spinning round or being swung around. |

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|--------------|---|
| Connection | A child may spend time joining the train tracks together, stick the masking tape across from the table to the chair. |
| Positioning | A child may put things on their head, prefer their custard next to their sponge not over it, and lie on the floor or under the table. |
| Transforming | A child may add juice to their mashed potato, sand to the water tray, enjoy adding colour to corn flour or making dough. |

Although children often show particular schemas in their play, not all children appear especially schematic. Some show one particular schema particularly strongly and others show several at once. Sometimes one schema which has been particularly strong will seem to fade, possibly to be replaced by another. Schemas offer a key to understanding ways in which children behave. In the planning process, awareness of children's schemas can be invaluable in matching curriculum content with children's interests and needs.

Children with enhanced schematic play

Children whose play is particularly schematic may have particular preferences in the setting for activities and resources. Examples of this include:

| <i>Schema</i> | <i>Child's preferences</i> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Connection (joining) | Train track, construction, string, sellotape |
| Enveloping (covering, surrounding) | Dens, things in boxes, envelopes, dressing up, wrapping presents |
| Rotation (circles) | Circle games, wheels, roundabouts, spinning tops, kaleidoscopes |
| Trajectory (straight lines) | Throwing games, woodwork, percussion, football, playing with running water |
| Transporting (moving things) | Shopping bags, buggies, trailers |

Examples of schemas by activity

Expressive activities

| <i>Expressive activities</i> | <i>Connection</i> | <i>Enveloping and enclosure</i> | <i>Rotation</i> | <i>Transporting</i> | <i>Trajectory</i> |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|
| Fabric | Sewing, threading, weaving and knitting | Making bags | Taking turns | N/A | Sewing, knitting and weaving |
| Role-play | Filling handbags, arranging furniture, cushions, bricks | Filling bags, dressing up dolls in cots, prams, dressing dolls, blankets over tables | N/A | Playing post people, or milk people, moving house, pulling toys on string | Appropriate ways of running, throwing, kicking in role |
| Paint | Patterns and symmetry | Borders for pictures, bubble painting, covering paintings | Mixing paint, finger painting, paint rollers, marble painting | Carrying paint/water to objects | Spray and splatter painting, blow painting, squeezezy bottle |

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|-----------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| Workshop | Sellotape, string, boxes, glue, junk modelling, kites, threading | Masks, hats, wrapping up, crowns, tape, putting things in boxes papier mache | Making containers or vehicles | Making containers or vehicles | Paper aeroplanes, toy parachutes, elastic bands, catapults |
| Books | Making books | Opening and closing books | Repetitive stories and rhymes | Going to the library, taking books to special places | N/A |
| Graphics | Symmetry and calendars | Envelopes, writing in little books, letter boxes | Round paper Spirograph | Sending and receiving letters, parcels and messages | Rulers, drawing/ writing about cars and planes |
| Music and sound | Percussion | Headphones | Record player, rounds, chants, ring games | Taping music, listening and imitating | Percussion |

Building and making activities

| <i>Building and making activities</i> | <i>Connection</i> | <i>Enveloping and enclosure</i> | <i>Rotation</i> | <i>Transporting</i> | <i>Trajectory</i> |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Small world | Train track, people, cars, layouts, animals | N/A | N/A | Cars and tractors, trains, collections, layouts | Cars and ramps |
| Games and puzzles | Dominoes, jigsaws, matching and tessellating games and magnetic fishing | Feely boxes, lotto | Turn-taking, Incy Wincy spider | Whisper games, snakes and ladders and ludo | Throwing dice or snakes and ladders |
| Small construction | Marble run | Putting away, houses for things | Cog wheels | Models with wheels | Building and demolishing towers, marble run |
| Large construction | Bricks and blocks | Burying things, houses for things | Cog wheels | Models with wheels | Making rockets, fast trains |

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|----------|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|---------------------|
| Woodwork | Nails, nuts, bolts, wood to hammer | N/A | Drill Vice | Making things with wheels | Hammering Sawing |
| Cooking | Sequence in recipes | Picnic food, sandwiches, mince pies, pasties, stuffing and putting things away | Stirring, whisking, mixing, washing, liquidiser, rolling out pastry | Shopping for ingredients, taking things to oven or fridge, giving out food | Popcorn, chopping |

Exploring activities

| <i>Exploring activities</i> | <i>Connection</i> | <i>Enveloping and enclosure</i> | <i>Rotation</i> | <i>Transporting</i> | <i>Trajectory</i> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|--|--|---|
| Computer | Loading word processing, printing and symmetry | N/A | Sequencing and making patterns | Printing work | Pressing buttons |
| Outdoor play | Making up games, circle games, gardening, parachute games, obstacle courses, hose pipes | Burying things, hiding in or under tents, dens, hide and seek, parachutes, playing in boxes and boats | Sprinkler, skipping, hoops, rolling tyres down hills, wheeled toys, circular obstacle course | Trucks for collecting and carrying, road games, suitcase, moving equipment | Watering - pipes and cans. Flags, nets, running, hitting, throwing and aiming games. Balls, bats and skittles |
| Malleable | Connecting and modelling | Models with things inside, covering pies and cakes | Mixing dough and rolling/making balls | Dough to oven, carrying cakes in egg boxes | Garlic crush, hammering and throwing clay |

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|---------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| Investigation | Electric circuits, pulleys, pipes and plumbing | Microscope, binoculars, bottle's, collections, seeds and bulbs | Giro scope, cogs, pulleys, wheels, spinning tops, kaleidoscopes | Collections, pulleys, snail trails | Catapults, pulleys, rotators and reflection |
| Sand (wet) | Pipes, tunnels, sandcastles, filling things | Burying treasure and objects, tunnelling | Archimedes screw | Sand in buckets and trucks | Digging |
| Sand (dry) | Funnels and bottles | Filling bags and socks, filling pipes, collecting in yogurt pots, pipes and tunnels | Sand wheel | Pipes, guttering, trucks, trail's | Things with holes, pipes, guttering |
| Water | Pipes, hoses and bridges | Washing things, filling up bottles and funnels, making boats, blow bubbles | Waterwheel sprinkler | Hose pipes and tubing, pouring, guttering | Things with holes, bubbles, pumps, sprays, squeezey bottle |