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Be SunSmart, Play SunSmart

Early Childhood Resource



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SunSmart, Cancer Council Victoria
615 St Kilda Road
Melbourne Victoria
3004 Australia

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Acknowledgements

Be SunSmart, Play SunSmart (2003) was developed by Sue Elliott in consultation with the National Schools and Early Childhood Working Group, Cancer Council Australia.

The 2011 revised version was written by Anne Stonehouse, Justine Osborne and Prue Lane.

Illustrations by Kelvin Hucker.

About this resource

Participating in an early learning service – either a childcare centre, family day care service, kindergarten or playgroup – can offer children many good opportunities to learn important lessons that will stay with them throughout their lives. This learning sometimes occurs in planned activities. However, powerful learning also happens at other times, as children interact with each other and with adults and go about their daily lives together.

Using the concepts of Being, Belonging and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, this resource aims to assist early childhood educators to help young children minimise the risk of skin cancer.

It provides information to help educators and children know when sun protection is needed, which sun protection measures are best and recommendations about vitamin D.

It also outlines some starting points for incorporating SunSmart practices into the play experiences of early childhood programs so all children can develop an understanding of why they are learning these SunSmart habits.



Being SunSmart



Being SunSmart

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the main cause of skin cancer. UV damage also causes sunburn, tanning premature ageing and eye damage.

The good news is sun protection will cut your risk of skin cancer at any age, no matter if you are six months or 60 years old.

Sun protection

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Two in three Australians will develop some form of skin cancer before the age of 70. Sun exposure during childhood has a significant impact on a person's risk of skin cancer.

During the daily sun protection times (whenever UV levels are 3 or above – refer to page 7) use a combination of these five sun protection measures:

1. Slip on sun-protective clothing

Cover as much of the child's skin as possible with cool, loose-fitting clothes, and wraps for babies. The higher the UV protection factor (UPF) of the fabric, the greater the protection provided. If possible, choose fabrics that are at least UPF15 (good protection), but preferably UPF50 (excellent protection).

When clothing doesn't have a UPF label, look for fabrics that contain full percentages and/or blends of heavyweight natural fibres like cotton, linen and hemp, or lightweight synthetics such as polyester, nylon, lycra and polypropylene. The tighter the fabric structure, whether knitted or woven, the better the protection from UV radiation. Longer style shorts or skirts and tops that cover the shoulders, arms and chest are best. Polo shirts with a collar also help protect the neck.

2. Slap on SPF30 (or higher), broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen

Apply SPF30 (or higher), broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen to any skin unprotected by clothing at least 20 minutes before going outdoors. Re-apply it every two hours or immediately after swimming or sweating even if the sunscreen label says a different time. Most people don't apply enough sunscreen so frequent reapplication is important to get the best level of protection possible. It is recommended that children from about three years are encouraged to apply their own sunscreen under supervision. It is important they are given time to develop this skill so they will be ready for independent application at school.

Try setting up a sunscreen station with mirrors, sunscreen and cloths for hand wiping. A pump pack may be easier for children to handle. [See SunSmart's 'How to make your own sunscreen station' video](#). Services can usually save some money if sunscreen is purchased in bulk but make sure there is a long use by date.

If a service supplies sunscreen, it is recommended that families are informed of the brand/type and ingredients. Ask families to complete an authorisation form for the application of sunscreen. Some children may be sensitive to some sunscreens, so if the sunscreen the service supplies is not suitable, parents should supply an alternative for their child. If parents have responsibility for providing sunscreen, still ensure the service has some available for unexpected circumstances.

The Australasian College of Dermatologists states that because very young babies (less than six months of age) absorb more of any chemical applied to the skin than adults, the widespread regular use of chemical sunscreens is not recommended. However, there have been no reports of side effects occurring as a result of sunscreen absorption in babies to date. The American Academy of Pediatrics has stated that sunscreens may be used on infants younger than six months on small areas of skin if adequate clothing and shade are not available.



Many brands of sunscreen have a baby or toddler formula. These are just as protective, but much gentler on their skin. Look for sunscreens that have been dermatologically tested for sensitive skin.

Sunscreen tips:

- test the sunscreen on a small area of the baby or toddler’s skin to check for any skin reactions
- use an SPF30 (or higher), broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
- apply the sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside and re-apply every two hours (even if the stated water resistance is longer than two hours)
- use sunscreen with other forms of sun protection. Sunscreen should never be used to extend time in the sun.

3. Slap on a broad-brimmed hat

Choose hats that provide good shade to the face, back of the neck, eyes and ears. A good sun hat can also help protect the eyes by reducing the amount of UV reaching the eyes by 50%.

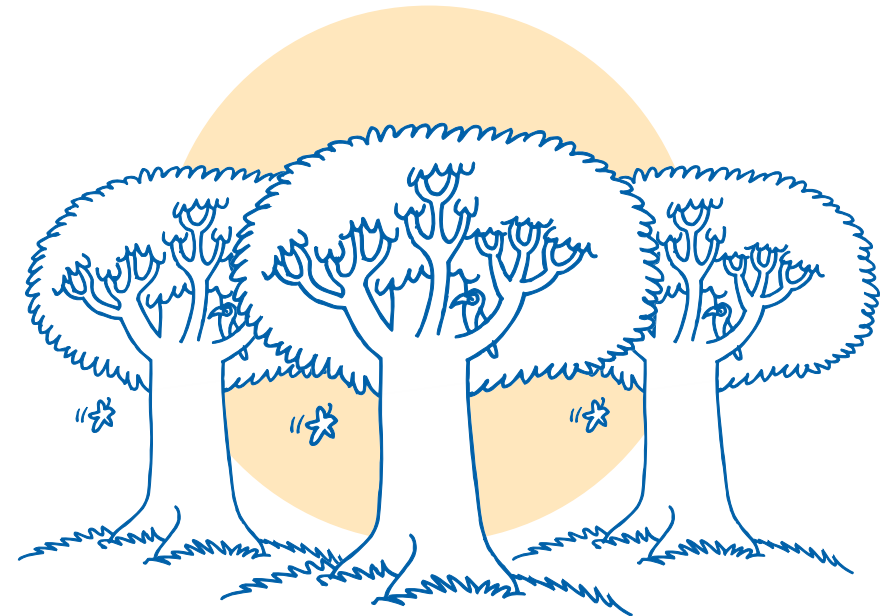
Suitable sun protection hats include:

- soft legionnaire hats, with a flap at the back to protect the neck – the flap and front peak should overlap
- bucket hats with a deep crown and angled brim that sit easily on the child’s head
- broad-brimmed hats.

For young babies, choose a fabric that will crumple easily when they put their head down.

Peak caps do not offer enough protection for the cheeks, ears and neck and are therefore not recommended.

When choosing a hat consider its size and comfort, the amount of shade it provides to the face, if it will obstruct vision or hearing and safety. Hats that can be adjusted at the crown are best. If the hat is secured with a long strap and toggle, ensure it has a safety snap, place the strap at the back of the head, or trim the length so it doesn’t become a choking hazard. Some children do not like to wear hats. Persistence is needed to teach them that a hat is part of their outside routine. Ensuring that children’s hats are labelled and kept in child accessible storage helps to make it easier to implement a ‘hat’s on, fun’s on’ kind of routine.



4. Seek shade

A combination of natural and built shade is essential for the outdoor play space. Research has shown that natural outdoor play spaces with shrubs, uneven ground and low reflectance surfaces are not only better for sun protection but also stimulate more physical activity.



Shade alone can reduce overall exposure to UV radiation by about 75%.

Shade should be correctly designed to offer the greatest coverage during peak UV radiation times and peak periods of use. For best protection, choose shade that has extensive overhead and side cover and is positioned away from highly reflective surfaces.

All children should be encouraged to use shaded areas for outdoor play. Babies under 12 months need to be kept out of direct sun and in the shade at all times. Even in the shade, the sun's UV can reflect from surfaces such as sand and concrete, so always use a hat, clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses. The shade moves with the sun, so follow the shade.

When travelling, use a shade visor or hang a blanket over the side windows in the car. Side and back windows don't offer as much protection as the front windscreen.

When using a pram, pusher or stroller, check that the hood can be adjusted, so that it can be moved to block out the direct sun. For best protection, pram shade covers should completely cover the pram and be made of densely woven fabric which combines a mesh section – so the baby can see and air can circulate – and a shade fabric section. The fabric section should block close to 100% of UV radiation (UPF50+) and the mesh section should block at least 70% of UV radiation (UPF33).



Image courtesy of Queensland Health

5. Slide on sunglasses

If practical, encourage children to wear sunglasses when playing outdoors. Sunglasses and a hat provide very good eye protection. Look for sunglasses that:

- are a close fitting, wrap-around style that cover as much of the eye area as possible
- meet the Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067:2003 (Sunglasses and fashion spectacles: sunglasses category 2, 3 or 4)
- are preferably marked eye protection factor (EPF) 10
- have soft elastic to keep them in place.

Toy or fashion-labelled sunglasses do not meet the requirements for sunglasses under the Australian Standard and should not be used for sun protection.



Vitamin D

The sun's UV is also the best natural source for vitamin D, which is needed for strong bones, muscles and overall health. There are also very small amounts of vitamin D that occur naturally in fish and eggs, while margarine and some types of milk have added vitamin D. However it is difficult to get enough vitamin D from diet alone. Babies get their initial store of vitamin D from their mothers, so they are at risk of low vitamin D if their mother has low levels. The body can only absorb a limited amount of vitamin D at a time. Spending extra time in the sun won't increase vitamin D levels, but will increase the risk of skin cancer.

In Victoria from mid-August to the end of April (when UV levels are typically 3 or above), most people will get enough vitamin D simply by going about their day-to-day activities. During these months, most Victorians need just a few minutes of mid-morning or mid-afternoon sun exposure for their vitamin D needs. Be extra cautious in the middle of the day when UV levels are most intense.

From May to mid-August in Victoria UV levels generally drop below 3 so sun protection is not usually needed during these months. People are encouraged to be outdoors around midday each day, with some skin uncovered. Being physically active outdoors will also help the body to make vitamin D. People with naturally very dark skin may need more UV exposure. People who work outdoors for long periods of time may need sun protection all year, as they have an increased risk of skin cancer. At this time of year, sun protection is also recommended when near reflective surfaces (such as snow), or if UV levels reach 3 or above.

If a family is concerned about their child's vitamin D levels, it is best they speak with their doctor.

UV radiation

You can see sunlight and feel temperature, but you cannot see or feel UV radiation. It can be damaging to skin on cool, cloudy days and hot, sunny days.

UV radiation comes directly from the sun. It can also be scattered in the air and reflected by surfaces such as buildings, concrete, water, sand and snow. UV radiation can also pass through light cloud.

Always check the daily sun protection times to know when you do and don't need sun protection each day. These are available via the [free SunSmart app](#) and website widget, in the weather section of the newspaper and on the [SunSmart](#) and [Bureau of Meteorology](#) websites.

During sun protection times use a combination of sun protection measures to keep children well protected during outdoor play. It is recommended that all babies under 12 months are not exposed to direct sun during these times. A baby's skin is thin, extremely sensitive and can burn easily.

Sun protection is not required when UV levels are below 3 unless in alpine areas, outside for extended periods of time or near highly reflective surfaces such as snow.

There is a free [SunSmart widget](#) that can be added to your service's website. Get your website administrator to follow the instructions at [sunsmart.com.au](https://www.sunsmart.com.au). There is also a [free SunSmart app](#).





Role modelling

Children often copy those around them and learn by imitation. Research shows that if adults adopt sun protection behaviours, the children in their care are more likely to do the same. Minimising UV exposure is also an occupational health and safety issue for educators.

Being SunSmart in Victoria

In Victoria average UV levels are 3 and above from mid-August to the end of April so a combination of sun protection measures are needed each day during these months.

From May to mid-August average UV levels are usually below 3 so sun protection is not normally needed unless in alpine areas, outside for extended periods or near highly reflective surfaces such as snow.

Check the daily sun protection times on the free SunSmart app or at sunsmart.com.au so you can see when sun protection is needed for your area. Involve children in finding out when sun protection is needed each day.



SunSmart in early learning

Daily living experiences, often labelled routines, offer excellent opportunities for educators to embed important learning in experiences that have meaning for children. SunSmart practices are excellent examples of daily routines with significant potential for valuable learning experiences. What makes the difference in children's learning is how they are carried out.

Belonging, Being and Becoming – The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (DEEWR 2009), often referred to as the EYLF, and the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework or VEYLDF (DEECD VCAA 2009) promote a focus on the child's whole experience. In the EYLF, curriculum is defined as 'all the interactions, experiences, activities, routines and events, planned and unplanned that occur in an environment designed to foster children's learning and development' (EYLF, p45).

This definition suggests that SunSmart practices do not sit apart from the curriculum but rather offer many valuable opportunities to collaborate with children and families to support children's learning. SunSmart practices can fit with many of the main concepts in the EYLF and VEYLDF, including the broad areas described in the five Learning Outcomes:

1. Children have a strong sense of identity.
2. Children are connected with and contribute to their world.
3. Children have a strong sense of wellbeing.
4. Children are confident and involved learners.
5. Children are effective communicators.

Perhaps the most obvious fit is with Outcome 3: Wellbeing, which is in part about children beginning to learn how to take care of themselves, to stay safe and healthy. Learning to get enough sun while protecting yourself from too much sun is an important life lesson in wellbeing. There are also a number of other ways that SunSmart practices link to ideas in the EYLF and VEYLDF.



Children as partners

One of the dominant concepts in the EYLF and VEYLDF is an image of children from birth as capable and competent as partners and collaborators in their own learning. The idea of children as collaborators and the desirability of nurturing children's sense of agency, applies directly to SunSmart practices.

Empowering children in routines contributes to a sense of agency and initiative. Practices as simple and straightforward as making sure hats are labelled and accessible to children, taking the time to let children get their hats and put them on themselves, and giving babies time to try to put them on as well, acknowledge children's agency.

Having mirrors at child height and providing pump pack sunscreen dispensers that children can manage enable children to apply their own sunscreen under supervision.

Educators can encourage children to remind each other about wearing hats and applying sunscreen. Enlisting children's help in reminding others nurtures a sense of community and caring for each other (Outcome 2). Talking to older children about the fact that a baby's skin is more sensitive, thinner and therefore more likely to burn also contributes to a sense of caring and community.

Asking children what they need to remember to do before going outdoors encourages independence.

Children can be invited to locate shady places to play and encouraged to check the daily sun protection times and the clock to help decide when being SunSmart is important.

Wearing hats are non-negotiable practices in services, even when children protest in words or actions. Having respectful partnerships with children means that educators acknowledge children's feelings when they resist and encourage and support them to go along with the requirement.



Conversations with and between children

The conversations that children have with each other and with adults, whether in designated learning activities or at other times of the day, add significantly to the learning that takes place. Weaving in discussion about the importance of sun protection in natural ways throughout the day will increase children's understanding and interest. It may help children to understand if a comparison is made with foods and eating. Just as there are good amounts of sun and good times to get sun, so it is healthy to eat the healthy foods in reasonable amounts. Too much food, or eating lots of unhealthy food, is not good for us, just as too much sun, or sun that has high UV levels can be unhealthy for us.



Talking with children about why applying sunscreen and wearing appropriate clothing and a hat is important will help them eventually understand these acts. The more they understand, the more co-operative they are likely to be. Simple explanations that fit children's understanding are best. It is useful to get in the habit of giving brief explanations, even when they are babies, when they won't necessarily understand.

Children may have questions about different skin tones and may wonder about whether dark skin will burn. These questions and discussions offer powerful opportunities for educators to talk in respectful ways about similarities and differences and to clarify any misconceptions that children have. Mem Fox's *Whoever You Are* is a great story highlighting that even though we may all look different, we are still the same. (Please refer to the literature list on page 26 for details.)

A range of opportunities to reinforce SunSmart messages may occur incidentally or as a focus during group discussions based on recent events, pictures or books. For example:

- A discussion about an upcoming visit to a local park or other excursion could include comments about what to remember in relation to sun exposure.
- A new hat could be the focus of discussion about how well it protects from the sun.
- Pictures of houses could evoke discussions about shady verandahs.
- An interest in animals might include discussions of how animals protect themselves.
- Photos of sporting identities and other famous people who are known to children or family photos can start a discussion about who is wearing sunscreen, protective clothing and hats (or who are not) and who are in the shade. Ask families to add to the collection.

- Digital cameras allow educators to take many photos of children. A focus of photos and conversations around them could include using sun protection for summer, the best shady spots and sun protective clothing.

Because UV levels vary across the year in Victoria, this requires a change in routine and practices. Sometimes UV levels will be consistently high and sun protection routines are needed each day. At other times, UV levels will be low with sun protection not recommended. Answer children's questions so they can start to understand why these routines are important. Children need to learn to appreciate both the importance of spending time in gentle sun and the dangers of too much sun. Understanding this can only come through discussions, being aware of children's misunderstandings, correcting these, and asking and responding to children's questions.

The EYLF and VEYLDF encourage educators to always try to determine the meaning of experiences from a child's perspective. Try to tune in to children's points of view. The reasons for staying inside or in the shade may be obvious to us but not to children. Explain practices; not only wearing sun-protective clothing, hats and sunscreen, but also why shade is important outside. Why are children encouraged to play in the shade?

The EYLF and VEYLDF encourage reflecting with children, talking with them about plans, interests, concerns and issues in the program. Interesting topics to explore with children include how to make sure everyone is protected from the sun, what kinds of sun hats and clothing are best and the reasons for this, and ways to encourage playing in the shade. For example, if there are issues about children forgetting to wear hats or not wanting to, raise this with the group and discuss possible solutions.



The environment

It is critically important to provide shade for children's time outdoors from mid-August to the end of April. Permanent shade or temporary canopies can help create inviting spaces that encourage children to stay out of direct sun. These may need to be moved during the day.

Children can be involved in making decisions about where to place materials and equipment outside to ensure that they are in the shade.

From May to mid-August, encourage children to find sunny spots in the outdoor area. Ask them to help pack the shade away or talk about changes in the outdoor space if shade has been removed.

Partnerships with families

Consistent messages and practices at home and in the early learning service will help children accept clothing styles, hat wearing and applying sunscreen as 'the way we do things'. Collaboration between educators and families is crucial. Some families may not be aware of the latest information and recommendations about sun exposure. Share information with them about the importance of protecting children from too much sun. Talk about protective clothing, which sunscreens are best and why, what types of hats give the most protection and why. Work together to devise ways to encourage children to wear hats.

The power of modelling

Modelling is a very powerful teaching tool. Children learn much more from what we do than from what we say. This means that it is very important for all educators and other staff, as well as family members and visitors, to wear hats, appropriate clothing and apply sunscreen when outdoors.



Playing SunSmart



Playing SunSmart

– Selected play and learning experiences related to SunSmart

One of the most effective ways to encourage learning is by naturally building in conversations and experiences related to SunSmart messages at times when they will engage children and have meaning for them.

The suggestions for play and learning experiences that follow are just that – suggestions. They are a starting point for educators, who will be able to think of modifications for the children they work with in promoting awareness and understanding about sun protection. Successful learning experiences always build on and extend the knowledge, skills and interests of the children and complement the communities that children and families come from as well as the community in which the service is located. Keep in mind that these experiences are only worthwhile if children are interested in them.

Many of the experiences suggested are appropriate for children over three years of age. Educators who work with children under three can reflect on ways to adapt some of the experiences for babies and toddlers and on other ways to engage very young children around SunSmart messages.

The aims of the suggested play experiences that follow are for children to:

- collaborate with, teach and learn from each other
- participate actively in sun protection practices in their daily routines and play
- gain knowledge and skills related to sun protection and appropriate exposure to sun
- appreciate the contribution of sun to good health
- show initiative and independence appropriate to their skills and abilities in taking some responsibility for their own sun protection practices
- explore concepts related to sun protection in a variety of ways.



A collection of SunSmart related experiences are available from SunSmart at sunsmart.com.au. Some of these are similar to the ones described in this resource, some are better suited for older children; however they may lead to new ideas for each particular group.

The most powerful and effective way to convey messages about the need to balance getting enough sun with sun protection is to enact it in daily practice with children, and to talk about it with them. Spending time in the sun at appropriate times and making sure children are aware of the reasons why this is a good time to be in the sun will help them to understand. Involve them in discussions about when are the best times of day, get them to look at the sun protection times each day and chart when sun protection is needed. Use the [Baby Sid sun protection times mini-poster](#) to notify everyone of the daily sun protection times. Collaborate with children to place equipment and materials in shady places. They will learn from these first-hand experiences. Be sure to point out the positives of sun – one simple one being the way it warms us when we are cold or helps our bones and muscles become strong and healthy!



Imaginative and dramatic play

Imaginative, pretend and dramatic play begins at a very young age. They involve children exploring their understandings through pretending in some way, typically using simple props. For example, a toddler putting a hat on a teddy or doll or pretending to put sunscreen on is engaging in imaginative play. These kinds of play become more complex as children develop their ability to communicate in language and spend more time collaborating with each other in play.

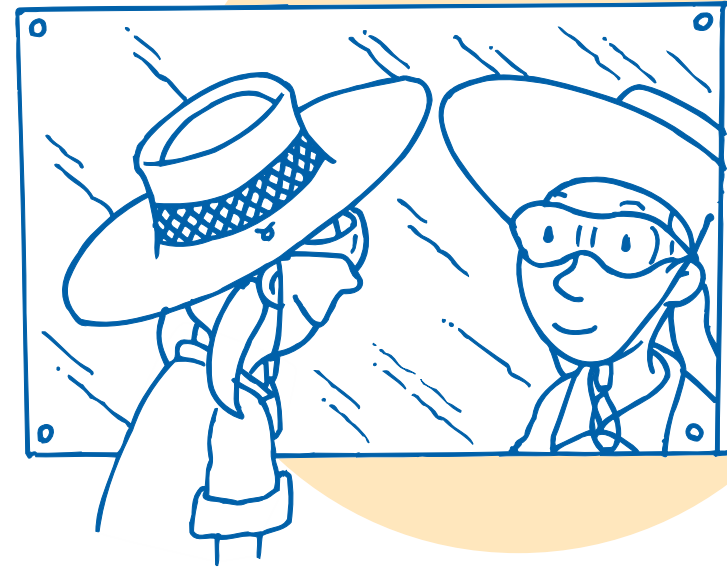
Educators can provide props that encourage imaginative play and that can incorporate elements of SunSmart practice for children to explore.

For example: The educator can provide materials that suggest a picnic in the park or a day at the beach. Try to draw on recent group or family interests when choosing a scenario for exploration. Provide a small table covered in a plain cloth (green to represent a park perhaps) or a shallow sand tray set up to suggest a beach (or place the materials in the sand pit). Arrange some play materials such as small dolls with protective clothing and hats, some wooden blocks for construction of seats, shelter or a table. Use a real pot plant for shade, a square of real shade cloth, some small pieces of fabric for picnic mats or towels and a miniature tea set. Provide one or two chairs or cushions for the children.

This experience can provide a rich prompt for discussion with children. The educator can encourage discussion with questions and comments such as, 'Where is the best shady place for the doll's picnic?' and, 'What beautiful shady hats the dolls are wearing today!'

Dramatic play provides opportunities for children to try some of the roles and responsibilities observed daily in adults' behaviour. SunSmart practices can easily be a part of those roles and responsibilities.

Consider ways that SunSmart messages can be incorporated into children's dramatic play interests indoors or outdoors. For example, shopping trips, camping holidays, exploring the beach, a fishing expedition, dressing dolls, working on a



farm and gardening can all easily involve SunSmart practices such as wearing hats, protective clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen and finding shade. Ensure that materials are available to support these practices – for example, baskets of hats, protective clothing and sunglasses, large umbrellas or cloths and a collection of empty clean sunscreen bottles. Set up a SunSmart dramatic play prop box so the items are readily accessible.

Educators can make judgments about when and how to contribute to the play to promote SunSmart practices with children to enhance it, not diminish it. Sometimes the best contribution is to stand back and not intervene. Educators could ask questions such as:

- What do you need to pack to go to the beach?
- Where is the best shade to set up your picnic?



- What is the best time of day to work in the garden?
- Did you remember to put sunscreen on your doll before going out?

Where appropriate, help children to answer questions by giving them information that helps them understand sun protection. Encourage them to ask questions. However, as with all learning experiences, avoid overdoing efforts to turn everything into a lesson. A relentless barrage of questions can reduce rather than enhance children's interest.

Group experiences

- **Weather match game**

The purpose of this game is to identify and put on appropriate clothes to protect yourself according to the weather. Provide a basket or box containing a selection of clothes appropriate to different weather – for example, a woollen coat, gumboots, mittens, a sun hat, an empty sunscreen bottle, sunglasses, a raincoat and a woollen beanie. Invite children to discuss what clothes children might wear to protect their bodies in particular types of weather.

Place the basket of clothes in the middle of the group and invite two children to play the game next to the basket. One child suggests the type of weather and the other puts on the appropriate clothing in response. They can then choose two more children to participate. As the game progresses, reinforce the type of clothing chosen for the type of weather nominated and how it protects the body. It may be appropriate to follow up the game with a picture storybook, finger play or song that further reinforces the concept. Some possibilities are listed in the literacy and literature sections (page 18 and 26) of this booklet.

- **Trying on hats and sunglasses**

Younger children are likely to enjoy opportunities to practise putting on hats and sunglasses of various designs. Have a mirror mounted on a child-size dressing table or on a wall.

Add a basket of sunglasses of various styles, for example, wrap-around, small lens and coloured lens, and a basket of various types of hats such as broad-brimmed, no brim, see through, a visor and hats from various cultures. When the emphasis is simply trying on hats and sunglasses, the experience is an individual rather than group one. When this experience is offered to older children, invite discussion about which hats or sunglasses offer the best protection from the sun. Try shining a torch from above to check their predictions.

- **Singing games**

A variety of singing games, for example, Punchinello, Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush, Here We Go Looby Loo, Did You Ever See a Lassie? can be adapted to reinforce SunSmart messages. Try being creative with the words of your favourite singing game or encourage children to come up with new lyrics. One example is an adaptation of the action song, The Seven Steps with each step being a SunSmart action: put on protective clothing, put on a hat, apply sunscreen, put on sunglasses, find some shade and play.

Check favourite music resource books for songs and action rhymes relevant to sun protection. The SunSmart Countdown song, recorded by Justine Clarke, aims to help children remember the five SunSmart steps. It is available for free from the [SunSmart website](#) along with other songs and rhyme activities.



Read the story *Beep, Beep, Let's Go!* by Eleanor Taylor (refer to literature list on page 26 for details). Discuss what needs to be packed for the outing. Create a cardboard box car and pack it with all of the things needed for an outing – including SunSmart gear!

Rhyme and mime: as the lines are said, mime putting on the sun hat, t-shirt, sunscreen, sunglasses and putting up the umbrella.



***Beep, beep, let's go,
remember our sun hat and off we go
Beep, beep, let's go,
remember our t-shirt and off we go
Beep, beep, let's go,
remember our sunscreen and off we go
Beep, beep, let's go,
remember our sunglasses and off we go
Beep, beep, let's go,
remember our shady umbrella and off we go.***

Alternatively try inserting different transport noises – ask children to suggest some or use ones from the story.

For example

***Beep, beep, let's go,
remember our sun hat and off we go
Chugga, chugga, let's go,
remember our t-shirt and off we go
Toot, toot, let's go,
remember our sunscreen and off we go
Honk, honk, let's go,
remember our sunglasses and off we go
Choo, choo, let's go,
remember our shady umbrella and off we go***

Ask children to lead the song, suggesting which sun protection measure to include next as they go along.

For example

Beep, beep, let's go... 'Jamie what should we take with us?'



Literacy and literature

Literature can provide a range of experiences including exposing children to print and symbols. Refer to the accompanying literature list (page 26) which provides further examples of books useful for promoting discussion.

Bring in several different sunscreen bottles. Ask children to compare them. Talk about the symbols and text on them, including the different levels of sun protection. Share a range of literature – posters and brochures – with children. Talking about the messages will not only increase their understanding but also help them to think more critically about text.

Ask children to design a poster that communicates important messages about sun protection. It could include photos of the children to illustrate the messages.

Literature can be simple board books, fun poems or rhymes, picture or storybooks, picture reference books or riddles that older children enjoy. It can also include posters, pictures from magazines and newspapers and digital images and text. When selecting children's literature look for ways of promoting awareness and discussion about SunSmart practices. For example, when children discuss trips to the beach, the picture book *Magic Beach* by Alison Lester is an old favourite for extending this interest and reinforcing SunSmart practices. (Please refer to the literature list on page 28 for details.)

When reading *Magic Beach*:

- spot the beautiful broad-brimmed watermelon hat or the comical legionnaire fish hat
- identify which children are wearing protective clothing at the beach
- locate the sunscreen bottle; it is in a very unlikely place
- find who is wearing sunglasses to protect their eyes



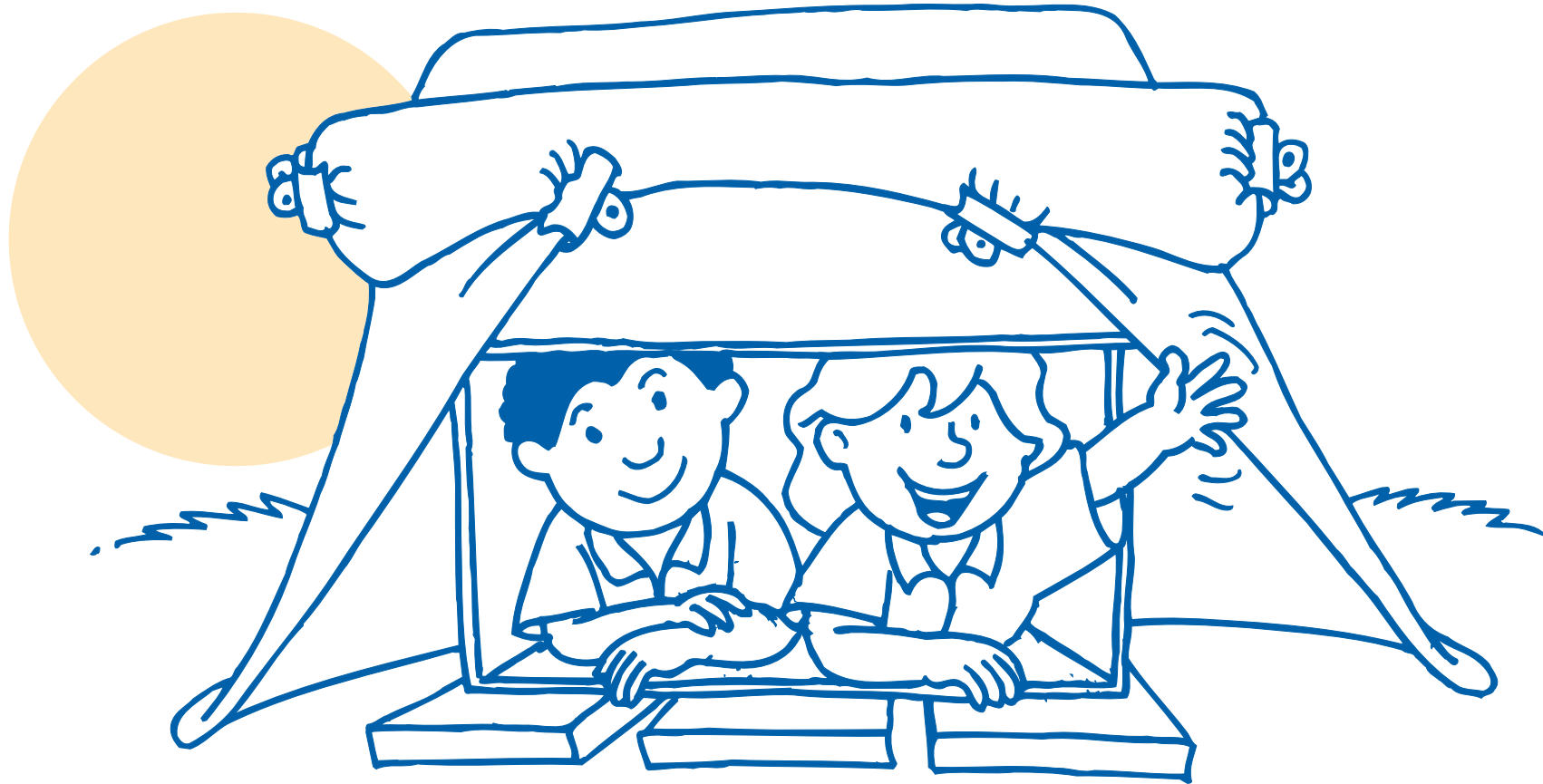
- ask how many umbrellas are providing shade for people
- allow opportunities for children to discuss how they protect themselves from the sun at the beach
- consider the time of day and weather depicted on each page. What time of day and type of weather presents the greatest risk of UV radiation damage to the skin?



Construction

Shelter from the elements is a basic human need and there are a variety of ways educators can encourage exploration of shelter construction with young children. Creating shady cubbies will require different levels of adult support depending on the skills of the children involved. Like all outdoor workers, cubby builders need to be SunSmart too!

Search with the children for shady places to play outdoors, for example, under verandahs, trees, shade sails, and large umbrellas. Discuss how shady places feel – some are cooler, darker, warm or light. Why are they important to protect us from the sun?



Suggest making a shady cubby from a selection of the materials listed below. Compare the different kinds of shade created by the materials and discuss which might be the most effective. Ensure that there is a range of accessible construction materials such as:

- outdoor blocks
- short lengths of timber 1–1.5m
- closely woven, dark-coloured fabrics (try old bedspreads or curtains from the op shop. Lace and other loosely woven fabrics let a lot of UV through so aren't effective for shade)
- moveable A-frames
- short climbing planks
- large cardboard boxes
- large sheets of cardboard or masonite up to 2m square
- bamboo or tea tree poles
- logs and pegs
- bulldog clips
- shoe laces
- thick rubber bands or short lengths of rope for securing.

Ensure that these are displayed in an orderly way that encourages children to make good choices.

An alternative to building a cubby is growing one by planting flowering creepers or climbing vegetables at the base of each of several teepee stakes. Consult a gardening reference for the most suitable local plants.

Consider the most appropriate surface to build on. Remember outdoor blocks need a very flat surface to be stable, whereas a teepee made from poles lashed together at the top is more stable on uneven ground such as grass or tanbark.

Some cubbies come ready made such as an appliance carton. Some evolve in a spontaneous fashion on site and some are planned either verbally or on paper. Educators can construct a cubby for very young children and older pre-school

aged children can construct one either independently or with some help from an adult. Important points for discussion between children and educators are the cubby's location in relation to sun and shade at different times of the day, the orientation of the entrance/exit, the size, design, method of construction and choice of materials. Children will use a range of skills and knowledge in the process of building a shady cubby for sun protection. This type of project can offer valuable experiences in:

- working collaboratively with other children
- making a plan
- problem solving
- perseverance
- negotiating and many other opportunities related to the Learning Outcomes in the EYLF and VEYLDF.

It may be appropriate to extend cubby building further with photographs or books depicting other ways that humans have created shelter from the elements. House designs vary around Australia with the climate and time period they were built. In other countries, traditional homes are quite different to those built by indigenous Australians. What did different tribes use? Why are there such differences in their types of shelters? Look at traditional igloos made from ice, mud homes, log cabins or grass huts. This exploration provides a good opportunity to discuss the similarities and differences between children's homes in Australia and overseas. Children could create models of their home through drawing, painting or block structures. This helps build connections between children's lives at home and the early learning program. It also helps children develop an awareness and appreciation of the cultural diversity amongst their group.

Shelter may also be found naturally rather than being created by humans, for example caves and hollow trees. The picture storybook *Rosy's Visitors* by J Hindley (please refer to the literature list on page 26 for details) describes how a child has an adventure and finds a new house in the hollow of an old tree.

Smaller-scale construction with project blocks also provides opportunities to discuss designs that provide shade. Support children's constructions with questions such as 'Where could the verandah fit?' or 'How can you build a verandah?'



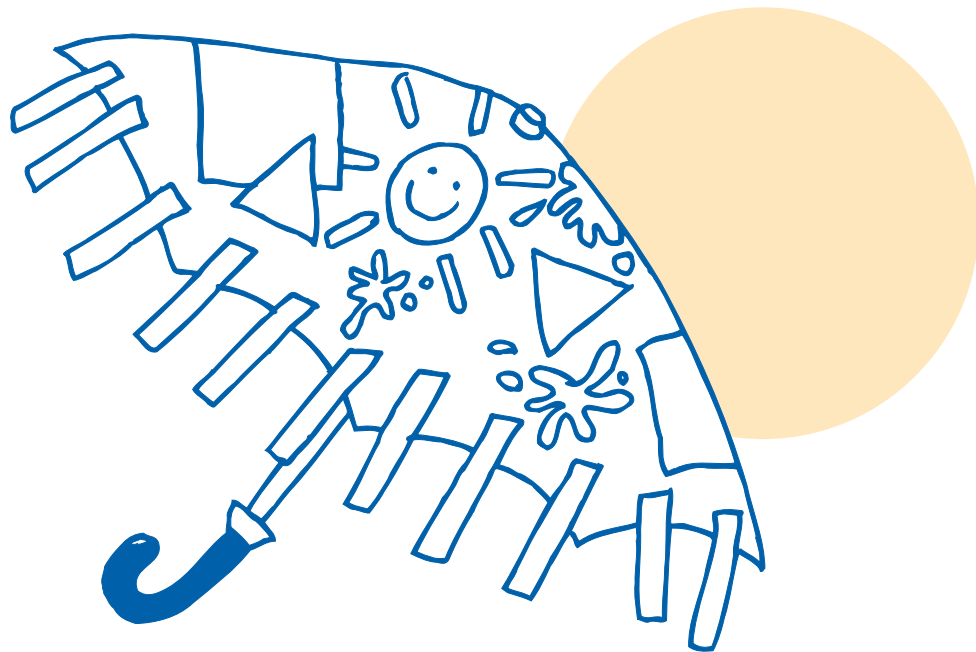
Manipulative play

A range of play experiences in which children use their hands and fingers may also be used to reinforce SunSmart practices. Some suggestions are listed below, but remember to be creative and think of ideas that best suit and challenge the children in your care.

- Provide table or floor puzzles depicting protective clothing, hats, skeletons, umbrellas, the seasons, outdoor scenarios or other images that offer opportunities for discussion about sun protection and vitamin D.
- Collect a number of empty, clean sunscreen bottles that may be reused in a variety of ways. This could include adding gravel or sand to make musical shakers, matching and sorting according to size, colour or shape. Use the bottles as skittles with a tennis ball, or add a magnifying glass for detailed exploration of the label. Talk with children about the contents of the label.
- Mount SunSmart images or their own SunSmart poster on card and laminate. Cut this into jigsaw pieces (sized according to skill of children in the group). Provide the jigsaw pieces in a basket on the floor. If children are unfamiliar with the poster, provide a copy for comparison and reference.
- Provide a basket of SunSmart dolls' clothes and a doll to dress and undress with perhaps a large photograph nearby to indicate the type of scenario the doll is to be dressed for – for example a park, the beach, a playground, summer, or winter.
- Offer a felt board with felt shapes for dressing figures and creating beach or park scenes to depict SunSmart practices.
- Use photographs cut from magazines or photographs of children in the group mounted on card to develop a set of SunSmart sequencing cards. Photographs could include a clock, putting on a shirt, putting on a hat, applying sunscreen, putting on sunglasses or a shady place to play. While each child can interpret the appropriate sequence, the key point is to reinforce the main actions that need to occur before going outdoors to play.
- Don't forget that simply putting on a hat and applying sunscreen requires considerable fine motor skills! Encourage children to apply it themselves always with supervision and help where needed.

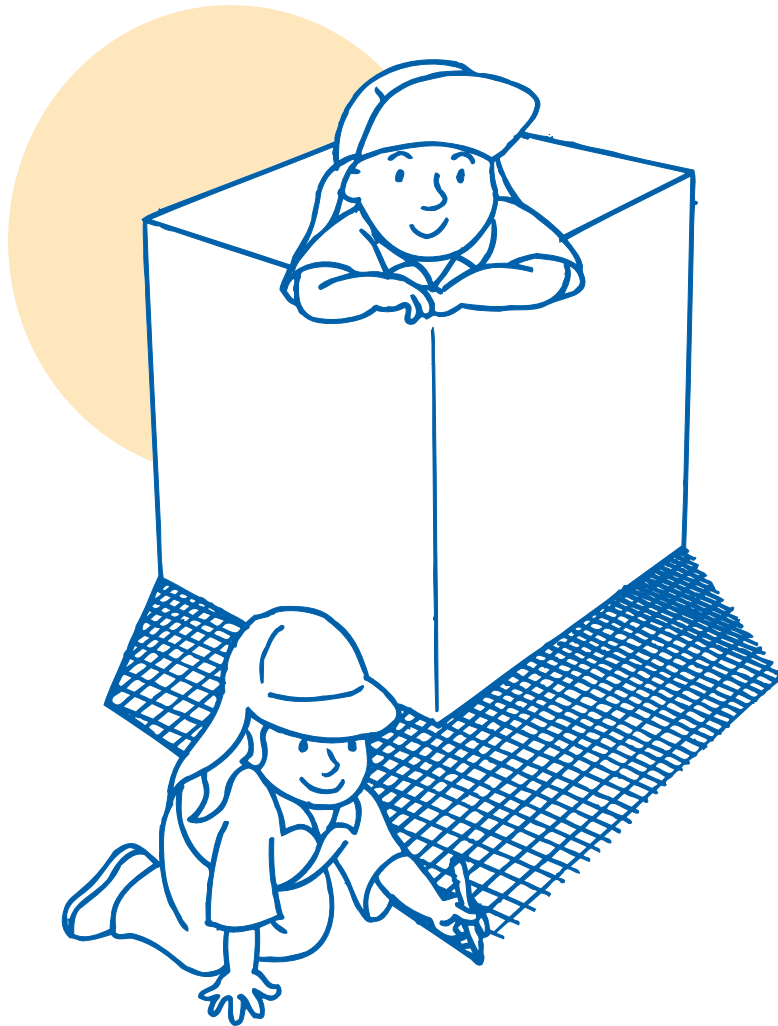


- Provide a selection of different colours and weaves of fabric for collage experiences. Encourage children to hold them up to the light before pasting to check how much sun protection they might provide.
- Design and make SunSmart clothes to paste on a child's own body tracing or dress a puppet or cardboard cutout figure.
- Invite children to stuff their own sun hats with newspaper and then paint them with cloth paints. Alternatively, children could make SunSmart hats from reusable containers such as cardboard boxes or plastic ice cream containers.
- Make clay or dough people and have children place them in the sun for a day to observe the effect of the sun.
- Provide sewing equipment and fabric and encourage children to sew a hat or clothing.
- Provide an old umbrella (even just the frame) to decorate with paint and/or collage materials.
- Invite children to use transparent collage materials such as cellophane or plastic to make creative stained glass windows or decorations. Watch how the sun comes through.
- Provide reflective materials such as foil and shiny paper to encourage experimentation with, and discussion about, reflection.
- Encourage experimentation with powder paint colour mixing to explore the range of skin pigmentation or perhaps the greens of shady trees.
- Invite a group of children to design and produce a poster that promotes a SunSmart message.



Discovery play

There are many science and maths concepts that underpin the SunSmart messages which can be explored through play.



Sunlight

Use children's experiences of the sun and its role to focus attention on the importance of the sun. This could include growing plants, feeling the warmth of the sun and leaving items in the sun to fade. Use a variety of posters and picture reference books to stimulate their interest and prompt discussion. One of the best ways to help children appreciate the sun's importance is through starting and maintaining a garden and/or growing pot plants. Whether your service has a large garden or just a few plants in pots, children can learn about the sun's role for healthy growth. Too much sun can damage plants and different plants need different amounts of sun. These messages can be related to information about the need for sun to be healthy and at the same time the need for protection from too much sun.

Reflection

Provide a selection of reflective surfaces to explore such as a shiny tin lid, a hand mirror, a piece of foil, a cake tin or a dish of water. Add a torch or place the experience near a window and encourage children to observe how the light is reflected. Support these observations with reference to the reflection of sunlight outdoors from sand, snow and ice, paved areas or water and the need for sunscreen to protect the skin from reflected sun.

Shadows

Objects blocking light create shadows (shade). The light source may be the sun or human-made light such as a torch, electric light or slide projector. Experimenting with shadows often begins with observing one's own shadow when outdoors. Help children explore the connection between the changes in shadow shape and changes in one's body position. Invite children to locate shadows outdoors and the object creating the shadow, noting the distortion that often occurs when shadows are created. Try tracing around shadows with chalk or rope and return later in the day to note how the shadow has changed in shape. Alternatively, photograph the same location over a day and compare the photographs. Placing a sundial in the outdoor play area could extend this observation further.



Explore shadows indoors with a shadow board made simply from an electric light source and a securely draped sheet. Try guessing what objects are creating the shadows on the shadow board. Make hand shapes or use shadow puppets. Contrast dense objects, which create dark shadows (a wooden block, or a shoe) with less dense objects (a lace cloth or clear plastic container). Objects could be grouped according to the density or shape of the shadow.

Tape a piece of black cardboard/construction paper on the wall. Ask children to sit side-on next to it. Shine a light from the other side and outline the face with chalk. Cut out and mount on contrasting paper to create a silhouette of each child. Display these and ask children to guess which 'shadow' belongs to each child.

Skin

Discovery of skin is a fundamental sensory experience. Consider how skin feels: warm, cool, soft, rough, bumpy, hairy, and wrinkly. Provide a magnifying glass to explore skin close up. Ask questions such as, 'What can you see?' Use photographs of people to observe different skin tones and how skin changes with age. Ask questions such as, 'Why do we have skin?' 'How does it protect us?' 'How can the skin be damaged?' If appropriate, extend the discussion of skin to include other animals and their body coverings. For example, worms and frogs have damp skins to allow for respiration through the skin, reptiles have scales to assist water conservation, echidnas have spikes to protect them from predators and zebras have stripes for camouflage. Use pictures of animals to sort and group according to body covering. Again, as with so many experiences, the conversations that occur can have a huge impact and influence on the quality of learning.

Humans use fabric to protect their skin from sun damage. Examine different fabrics in detail with children. Try using a magnifying glass or a torch with a range of sun protection objects such as hats, shirts, umbrellas and shade cloths. Discover which weaves let the most light through so only offer limited sun protection. Extend the investigation to a variety of fabric swatches to identify the best sun protection fabric for making a hat or shirt.

Shade

Trees provide shade for play outdoors, so planting and caring for trees is important. Invite children to identify the shade trees in the outdoor play area and consider how much shade they provide. It may be appropriate to measure the area using outdoor blocks or ropes and at different times of the day. If more shade is needed use reference books, the internet or a visit to a plant nursery to discover the best local trees for shade. Engage children and families in decisions about positioning new trees and planting them. Each family or group involved in the service could donate a plant or take responsibility for a particular part of the outdoor area. Remember to consult gardening references or local gardeners about caring for trees. Discuss the information with children and work together to look after the trees. Maintaining a photographic record of tree growth and the shade provided could also help children's understanding.

Sunscreen pumps

Small plastic pumps similar to the pumps used for larger sunscreen bottles can be used for water play. Children can explore how the pump works with water in a trough and develop the fine motor skill necessary to work the pump. Pumps with or without plastic bottles can be purchased from hardware shops or bulk suppliers of cleaning products.



Literature



Be SunSmart, Play SunSmart

Literature for early learning services

If you can't find these books in your local book store or library, you should be able to order them online. At the time of publishing this list, they were all available. You can also access resources via the SunSmart website at sunsmart.com.au/education-resources.

Art

Katie and the Bathers James Mayhew (2004) Orchard Books 1843620359.

On a hot, sunny day, a painting of some bathers in a cool river proves too tempting for Katie so she dives straight into the picture! But Katie doesn't just cause a splash – she causes a flood! Paddling with new friends might be fun, but how will Katie stop the water pouring into the gallery? Join Katie on her latest adventure as five famous Pointillist* paintings come alive for her in the art gallery. (*Pointillists painted their pictures entirely in dots, deliberately placing contrasting or complementary colours next to one another to create different effects.)

Environment

Baby Bilby Where Do You Sleep? Narelle Oliver (2001) Hachette Australia 9780734402301

Rhyming children's picture book about the hiding places of Australian desert animals. Peepholes provide a glimpse of the animal featured on the next page. Readers turn the page to see the animal's hiding place.

Islands in my Garden Jim Howes and Roland Harvey (2002) Penguin Books Australia 014350052X

Come sailing around our backyard. Explore the islands and their caves, their valleys, plains and forests and underground cities. If you look closely, you'll find you're not the only traveller visiting this garden – a place full of surprises, a place with a special reason for being kept just as it is.

My Farm Allison Lester (1994) Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW 1863737006
This story gives a vivid picture of a child's life on the land.

Rose Meets Mr Wintergarten Bob Graham (1992) Walker Books London 468109753

All the children are afraid of mean Mr Wintergarten. He's got a dog as big as a wolf, they say, and his garden is grey and sunless. Next door, the Summers' garden is full of flowers and sunshine.

Rosy's Visitors Judy Hindley (2002) Walker Books, London. 0744598095

Rosy decided to find herself a whole new house. So she packed up her blanket and her pillow, and her books and toys, and all her favourite things ... and started looking. And before long she finds the perfect house in the hollow of a little tree.

The Echidna and the Shade Tree Mona Green (2004) Scholastic Australia 9781865046228

The Aboriginal story of how the Echidna got its spines.

Holidays / Outings

Beep, Beep, Let's Go! Eleanor Taylor (2005) Bloomsbury Publishing 074757302 6

Join the animals on their wonderful fun-filled outing. But where are they all going with their picnics and special things?

Good Morning Sam Marie-Louise Gay (2003) Allen and Unwin 174114042 0

Sam's big sister Stella helps him get ready to go out. Have they both remembered everything? Have they remembered the five SunSmart steps?

Grandma's Beach Rosalind Beardshaw (2002) Bloomsbury Children's Books, New York 1582349355

Emily and her mum are on their way to the beach until mum gets a phone call and has to go into the office. Emily will have to visit her grandma instead. But Grandma doesn't live anywhere near the seaside. Emily is so disappointed. So Grandma decides to cheer her granddaughter up by creating a very special beach in her back garden.



Mr Bear's Holiday Debi Gliori (2007) Orchard Books Australia 9781846164309

"I love holidays," says Small Bear, as Mr Bear and his family set off camping. But when a 'monster' appears outside the tent, the Bears wonder if it's a holiday or an adventure!

Rosie's Holiday Rachel Pank (2002) Piccadilly Press 1853406228

At first Rosie doesn't want to go on holiday but when she arrives at the beach she discovers the big blue waves, the boats, the sand and shells and much more. And then she doesn't want to go home!

Spot's Days Out: Spot's First Walk & Spot Goes to the Park Eric Hill (1998)

Penguin 9780723257592

Is Spot SunSmart on his adventures? What time of year do you think it might be? Is he getting some winter vitamin D?

Spot's Fun Year: Spot Goes to School & Spot Goes on Holiday Eric Hill (1998)

Penguin 9780723257615

Is Spot SunSmart on his adventures?

What Will I Do Today? Dick Bruna (2003) Hardie Grant Egmont Australia

It's Saturday! What will Miffy do? Go to the playground? Fly with her uncle the pilot? Play in the garden?

Hats

Dorothy the Dinosaur and her Magic Hat Liane McDermott (2005) University

of Queensland 1864993936

Wags the Dog learns how to play safely in the sun with the help of Dorothy the Dinosaur's magic hat.

The Quangle Wangle's Hat Edward Lear (2005) Walker Books 9781406300420

The Quangle Wangle has a huge hat that becomes home to many other friends. This story not only provides a great link to sun hats but also the shade and shelter a tree can provide.

The Magic Hat Mem Fox (2002) Scholastic Australia 1865044636

The magic hat appears and bounces its way on to all different heads.

Starting school

Rabbit Gets Ready Claire Fletcher (1995) Random House Children's Books, London 0370319605

Today is Rabbit's first day at a new school and he has a funny feeling in his tummy. Worse still, he doesn't know what to wear. The knitted swimming costume, perhaps, or the blazer and boater? Poor Rabbit is forced into a last-minute decision by the arrival of the school bus.

Summer

Get Busy This Summer! Stephen Waterhouse (2004) Bloomsbury Publishing 0747564744

When the sun comes out it's time for the penguin family to pack up their things, put on their hats, and set off on their summer holiday.

Seasons

Out and About Through the Year Shirley Hughes (2002) Walker, London 0744560624

In this collection of poems, a small girl and her baby brother romp through the changing seasons, taking pleasure in the different elements and weather conditions – sunshine, wind, rain, mist and snow.

Splash, Joshua, Splash! Malachy Doyle (2004) Bloomsbury Publishing 0747561095

Joshua and his granny go out for a day together. The day is full of splashes in puddles, ponds, a fountain and a pool.



Sunny Day Anna Milbourne (2008) Usborne Publishing 0746089198

Follows two children on a sunny day as they run through a field of sunflowers, watch bees busy making honey and listen to crickets playing creaky tunes in the long, dry grass.

Skin type

Whoever You Are Mem Fox (1998) Hachette Children's Books Australia, Sydney 0733608590

Every day all over the world, children are playing, laughing and crying. They may not look the same or speak the same language, but inside they are just like you. This magical story celebrates the differences in our lives that unite us all.

The beach

Australia at the Beach Tom Jellett & Max Fatchen (1999) Omnibus Australia 1862913935

What do you like to do at the beach? How do you get ready?

Grandpa and Thomas Pamela Allen (2003) Puffin Books 0143501313

Thomas and Grandpa go to the beach. It is an Australian summer. The sun is shining, the gulls are screeching and the sea is singing.

Greetings from Sandy Beach Bob Graham (1990) Hachette livre Australia Sydney 085091521X

The story of one family's camping holiday at the beach – a beach they must share with a bus load of school kids and The Disciples of Death motorbike gang!

Harry by the Sea Gene Zion (1994) Random House 9780099189718

Harry, a friendly little dog on a visit to the seashore, is mistaken for a sea serpent when a big wave covers him with seaweed. The ridiculous but somehow plausible situations capture even the most reluctant reader.

Lulu's Holiday Caroline Uff (2001) Orchard Books 1843624788

Come and spend a fun day with Lulu at the seaside!

Magic Beach Alison Lester (1990) Allen and Unwin, NSW 1741144884

Imagine a perfect beach where you can swim, surf, splash through the waves, make sandcastles, hunt for treasures, explore rock-pools, muck about in boats, fish from the jetty, and build a bonfire under the stars.

My Hippopotamus is on Our Caravan Roof Getting Sunburnt Hazel Edwards (1989) Puffin Books (2006) 0143501380

A family goes on holidays to the beach but not everyone is being SunSmart!

Not a Nibble Liz Honey (1997) Allen and Unwin 1864482427

A picture book for young children about a holiday at the beach.

On the Seashore Anna Milbourne (2006) Usborne Publishing 9780746062395

A look at life through the eyes of a child.

Spot Goes to the Beach Eric Hill (2005) Penguin 9780142501221

Is Spot SunSmart on his adventures?

The Boy on the Beach Niki Daly (1999) Bloomsbury Publishing 0747546843

It's a scorching hot day so Joe and his parents take a trip to the beach. Joe runs about in the sand, jumps in the waves, and finds a deserted old boat to play on.

