

Facts Sheet: 3 How young is too young for tutoring?

Children are born with an innate thirst for learning. Despite this, they do not all have the same innate aptitude for acquiring skills, language and knowledge about the world. Thus, some children are precocious and acquire language and reading skills at a very young age. Other children may be slow to acquire 'school-readiness' skills. Tutoring may be appropriate for students who have particular difficulties or those that are intellectually advanced.

Early intervention versus tuition

Early intervention refers to a range of strategies (such as speech therapy, occupational therapy and the like) designed to assist a child to catch up with median developmental rates. Tuition refers to educational experiences designed to foster learning at a rate commensurate with the ability of the child.

One-to-one tutoring (mentoring)

Children learn both in groups and on an individual, one-to-one basis. For the purposes of tuition it is the view of the Association that young children (pre-school aged) learn best on a one-to-one basis or in a small group situation.

How young is too young?

Children are never too young to learn, however in the formal context of tutoring it is the expectation that formalised tutoring will not take place before a child is aged three or in exceptional situations such when giftedness has been assessed. It should be noted however that a young gifted child subject to high levels of intervention may have difficulties in regards to socialising with their peers once they are at school. Thus particular care and attention needs to be given when deciding whether, or how, to tutor such children.

How much tuition is suggested if it undertaken?

One to three hours per week in a hands-on playgroup style would not be considered too much for very young children. However more than this would not generally be recommended except in exceptional circumstances (remediation, for example). The advantage of tutoring which is playgroup styled is that children may find age peers with similar abilities and thus feel more accepted. Thus early intervention can have a very positive impact on the self-esteem of children.

What tutoring is NOT recommended?

Classroom based formalised, didactic instruction is not recommended for young children. A worksheet based approach is not recommended. Young children need stimulus and movement thus it is appropriate to place them in environments where they will learn naturally and retain their sense of wonder and curiosity. This cannot be done in a highly formalised, rigid classroom.



For more information contact:

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