

Starting Out Safely road safety education play mat

Educator resource

About the play mat

The Starting Out Safely road safety education play mat has been designed to complement the Starting Out Safely resources. The play mat allows children to explore a Victorian road environment, while enhancing their road safety knowledge and understanding.

Measuring 1.2m x 80cm, the vinyl, water resistant play mat depicts a street scene including Victorian signage and a variety of features children see and experience in their everyday environment.

The Transport Accident Commission, supported by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, has funded one play mat for every early childhood service in Victoria.

VicRoads would like to also acknowledge Gowrie Victoria for the development of this educator and family resource guide.



Introducing the play mat

It is important to start by guiding children in the purpose of the play mat, promoting its features and encouraging respectful use.

Here are some tips to introduce the play mat to children:

- Introduce the play mat during group time, or in small groups if preferred, explaining its purpose and features.
- Read a road safety story. Check out the new road safety education storybooks written by renowned Australian author Danny Katz. Books can be purchased on line from the Victorian Government Bookshop www.bookshop.vic.gov.au.
- Gather and document children's ideas about how they might like to use the play mat. The children's conversations and ideas will help educators to assess prior knowledge and understanding which will guide planning for further learning.
- Promote conversations about how children travel to the service, encouraging children's thinking and decision making. For example:
 - what do we need to do before we cross the road together?
 - why do you sit in a booster seat or child restraint in the car?
 - what do we look for when crossing the road?
 - what sounds are we listening for when crossing the road?

Practice Principle - Reflective Practice

Use information to support, inform, assess and enrich decision making. Please refer to the information from the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework below:

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:

Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world. From birth, children live and learn with others in families, early childhood settings and local communities. Participating in their communities strengthens children's sense of identity and wellbeing.

Learning Outcome 3: Children have a strong sense of wellbeing, opportunities for children to learn about health and safety for themselves and others.

National Quality Framework reference

Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
1.2 The program for each child takes into account their strengths, capabilities, culture, interests and experiences.

Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
5.1 Respectful and equitable relationships are developed and maintained with each child.

Setting up the play mat

The play mat fits perfectly on a standard preschool child height table, but could also be used on the floor, on a low platform, or outdoors. Allow enough space around the play mat for children to move around and reach over freely.

(Note: Using chairs may limit a child's reach and type of play.)

Begin exploring the play mat by 'finger walking' to represent people. Add small rubber wheeled vehicles as directed by children. Other materials such as block or box cities, tree branches etc may be added according to interest.

(Note: Introduce new elements one by one so as not to overwhelm children with too many objects all at once.)

Practice Principle - Integrated Teaching and Learning

Plan opportunities for knowledge building based on what you know about the children, recognising that learning occurs within a social context, including shared interactions and sustained and rich conversations.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework:

Learning Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of identity.
Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

National Quality Framework Reference

Quality area 3: Physical environment
3.2 The environment is inclusive, promotes competence, independent exploration and learning through play.



Extending learning opportunities

A number of further learning strategies may be used to extend the children's road safety knowledge.

Excursions and centre events

Excursions within the local community present a wonderful opportunity to learn about road safety within real experiences; by practising holding hands, listening for traffic sounds, looking for different types of vehicles, sharing bike paths, identifying safe places to cross roads, being especially careful near driveways, and becoming familiar with road signs, their shapes and symbols.

Local crossing supervisor

Invite your local crossing supervisor to talk to the children about pedestrian safety.

Organise a ThingleToodle education session

VicRoads funds Kindergarten Parents Victoria to deliver a small number of ThingleToodle sessions to funded preschools in Victoria.

Emergency and evacuation procedures

Regular emergency evacuation drills are standard practice in early childhood centres. These drills often involve evacuation to a safe area away from the setting, usually accessed by walking in the local community. This provides an opportunity to engage in conversations with children about road safety.

Group games

Games are a fun way for children to practice and learn the necessary skills and road safety responses in a supportive environment.

Travel survey

Create a travel survey and ask each child how they travel to the early childhood setting. This could be combined with numeracy, literacy and building communication skills.

Traffic survey

Count the types of transport you can see from your setting.

Outdoor activities

Road safety language and actions can be incorporated into outdoor play through bike riding and pedestrian awareness. Tracks may be created and signs used to indicate where to stop, slow down, or be aware of others. Sand bags can be used to represent speed humps.

Community involvement

Children can take photos of local signs and symbols for display around the room, allowing children to be exposed to the various modes of communication. Using a Melway or other similar road maps, children can create their own maps of the journey to the service.

Partnerships with families

Provide parents and carers with road safety resource materials from VicRoads. Resources can be ordered on line from the Victorian Government Bookshop www.bookshop.vic.gov.au. Involve families in children's learning, surveys through reflection folders, newsletters and parent/teacher conferences.

Practice Principle - Integrated Learning Approach

Educators use their judgement to support children's learning and development using a combination of child-led, adult-led, play based learning as well as intentional teaching. Supportive adults extend children's thinking by being a play partner, a role model and guide.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Learning Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners.
Children transfer and adapt what they have learnt from one context to another

Learning Outcome 5: Children are effective communicators.
Children begin to understand how symbols and pattern systems work.

National Quality Framework reference

Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
2.3 Each child is protected

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
6.3 The service collaborates with other organisations and service providers to enhance children's learning and wellbeing
6.4 The service participates in the community

Planning for diversity

It is important to incorporate the following considerations into your program:

- Consider backgrounds of families and children – culturally and linguistically diverse families, how families travel, and what experiences the children have had with road safety.
- Consider children's abilities and differences in individual learning.
- Consider the setting of the service in the context of the local community e.g. railway lines, railway crossings, trams, rural settings, highways, inner city, etc.

Practice Principle - Equity and Diversity

Cultural competence is present when educators have ensured that the interests, abilities and culture of every child and their family are understood, valued and respected.

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework

Learning Outcome 2: Children are connected to and contribute to their world
Children respond to diversity with respect.

National Quality Framework reference

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities reference:
6.1 Respectful supportive relationships with families are developed and maintained.

More information

For more information about Starting Out Safely activities, including ThingleToodle education sessions, professional development and child restraint education, call Kindergarten Parents Victoria on (03) 9489 3500 or email: kpvrse.org.au

Road safety education and child restraint resources can be ordered on-line from the Victorian Government Bookshop at www.bookshop.vic.gov.au or by calling 1300 366 356.

For child restraint road rule questions, call VicRoads Customer Services on 13 11 71.

For more information about road safety education, visit www.roadsafetyeducation.vic.gov.au

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Family resource

Using the play mat in the home

The play mat can be set up in the home on a low table, dining table or floor space. Talk to your child about the purpose of the play mat and spend time with your child using 'finger walking' to represent people and small rubber wheeled vehicles to role model and teach safe road practices. Extra resources can be added as required. The mat can be stored flat or rolled up and kept in the storage tube.

Play provides opportunities for children to learn by doing, where they make choices, develop ideas and solve problems. Play fosters children's self-esteem and confidence and promotes curiosity and imagination as they discover the world around them. Adults can support children's play by allowing children time and space to play and explore their ideas in a safe environment.

You can help your children learn about being safe in the road environment by talking together and modelling safe behaviours when walking, riding or driving. Ask your children simple questions that encourage conversations, thinking and reflection.

- Teach children the concepts of stop, look, listen, think – show your child the letters **S L L T** near the children's crossing.
- Why do we hold hands to cross the road together?
- What do we need to be careful of when walking past driveways and laneways?
Show your child the reversing car on the play mat.
- Ask your child about the different signs on the mat and what they know about the signs.
- Ask your child what do we do before crossing the road together with an adult (stop, look and listen for traffic, and hold hands).
- Talk with your child about the different types of vehicles travelling on roads and the different directions the vehicles travel.
- Talk about vehicles travelling fast and slow.
- Show your child the kerb on the road and talk with your child about always exiting the car on the kerb side ('safety door').
- Show your child the car park and ask your child to tell you what you need to remember when arriving in a car park (wait for the adult and always use the safety door).
- Ask your child what helps to keep them safe when travelling in a car (a child restraint or booster seat).
- Ask your child to find 'safe' ways to travel from the preschool to the school. Ask them why they think the way they have chosen is safe.
- Talk about the different types of crossings with your child.

Resources

Starting Out Safely is Victoria's early childhood road safety education program. Starting Out Safely focuses on the correct use of child restraints and booster seats, pedestrian safety and safe play. For more information visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/startingoutsafely

VicRoads funds Kindergarten Parents Victoria to deliver road safety professional development, ThingleToodle education sessions and child restraint information sessions. Find out if your child's service implements road safety education. For more information visit www.kpv.org.au

VicRoads has a range of road safety education resources, including storybooks, music CD and puzzles, which are available for a minimal cost from www.bookshop.vic.gov.au

For information about child restraints and booster seats visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/childrestraints

This online resource has been developed by Gowrie Victoria. Gowrie bookshop: www.gowrievictoria.org.au