EYFS@RMS – Progression of Skills for the Construction Area

The Construction Area provides children with opportunities to explore materials, build structures, solve problems and develop their understanding of how things fit together. Through hands-on, imaginative and collaborative experiences, children develop spatial awareness, mathematical thinking, fine-motor control, creativity and resilience.



1. Explorers – discovering how things fit

Babies / younger toddlers, as appropriate

- Explore a range of construction materials through touching, holding and moving.
- Fill, empty, carry, drop and stack large blocks.
- Explore what happens when objects are placed on top of or beside one another.
- Begin to build simple towers and knock them down.
- Notice differences in size, shape, weight, texture and sound.
- Develop hand-eye coordination and control when handling objects.
- Explore cause and effect, such as noticing when a structure falls.



2. Developing builders

Typically 2–3 years

- Stack and join blocks to create simple structures.
- Build towers, walls, enclosures and simple arrangements.
- Explore balancing blocks and notice when structures become unstable.
- Sort and match construction pieces by colour, shape or size.
- Use simple construction language, such as big, small, tall, up, down and fall.
- Begin to use objects symbolically in imaginative play.
- Play alongside other children and share construction resources with support.



3. Purposeful constructors

Typically 3–4 years

- Combine different blocks and construction materials to create recognisable structures.
- Build roads, bridges, houses, enclosures and towers.
- Experiment with balancing, positioning, joining and supporting materials.
- Select resources to achieve a simple purpose or idea.
- Begin to plan what they want to build and make changes when something does not work.
- Use mathematical language to describe shape, size, position and quantity.
- Compare structures by height, length, width and stability.
- Work alongside peers, share ideas and begin to solve construction problems together.



4. Confident designers and problem-solvers

Typically 4–5 years

- Independently select and combine materials to create purposeful structures.
- Plan, design, construct, test and improve their models.
- Explore stability, balance, height, weight distribution and different ways of joining materials.
- Create more complex structures, including bridges, buildings, ramps and enclosures.
- Use photographs, pictures, drawings or simple plans to support construction.
- Apply mathematical understanding through counting, comparing, measuring and recognising shapes.
- Explain how a structure was made and identify what could be changed or improved.
- Persist when structures collapse or designs do not work as intended.
- Collaborate with others, negotiate ideas and solve problems together.

Progression of key skills

Skill	Emerging	Developing	Secure / extending
Stacking and joining	Handles, places and stacks objects	Builds towers, walls and simple structures	Combines materials to create complex constructions
Balance and stability	Notices objects falling	Experiments with balancing and positioning	Adjusts structures to improve stability
Spatial awareness	Explores placing objects together	Understands simple positional relationships	Plans layouts and considers how parts fit together
Design and planning	Builds through exploration	Builds towards a simple idea	Plans, tests and adapts designs purposefully
Problem-solving	Notices when structures fall	Tries different ways to rebuild	Identifies problems, tests solutions and refines designs
Mathematical thinking	Explores size, shape and quantity	Compares height, length and shape	Applies counting, measuring and spatial reasoning
Imaginative construction	Explores materials freely	Creates familiar objects and settings	Develops detailed models linked to stories and real-life experiences
Collaboration	Plays alongside others	Shares resources and ideas	Negotiates, plans and builds collaboratively

Adult role and provision

- Provide a rich range of resources: Offer wooden blocks, large and small construction pieces, magnetic tiles, interlocking bricks, cardboard tubes, boxes, planks and suitable loose parts.
- Model construction language: Introduce words such as balance, stable, taller, shorter, underneath, beside, between, bridge, support, connect and structure.
- Encourage problem-solving: Ask “How could you make it stronger?”, “What could support the bridge?” or “Why do you think the tower fell?”
- Extend mathematical thinking: Encourage children to compare heights, count blocks, explore patterns, identify shapes and use positional language.
- Introduce design challenges: Invite children to build a bridge for a toy animal, create a home for a small-world character or construct the tallest freestanding tower they can.
- Make meaningful links: Use stories, photographs, buildings, transport, community landmarks and children's interests to inspire construction.
- Value the process: Encourage children to test ideas, learn from mistakes and adapt their designs rather than focusing only on the finished product.
- Support collaboration: Encourage children to explain their ideas, share resources, negotiate designs and solve problems together.
- Support inclusion: Provide accessible materials, larger construction pieces, adapted tools, visual examples and additional time where needed, including for children with SEND.
- Observe and respond: Notice children's approaches to planning, balancing, spatial reasoning, persistence and collaboration to identify appropriate next steps.

Links to EYFS areas of learning

- Mathematics: shape, space, measure, pattern, counting, comparison and spatial reasoning.
- Physical Development: fine-motor control, hand-eye coordination, strength and coordination when manipulating materials.
- Expressive Arts and Design: imaginative construction, designing, selecting materials and representing ideas.
- Communication and Language: explaining plans, using positional vocabulary, asking questions and discussing solutions.

- Understanding the World: exploring materials, buildings, structures, how things work and the built environment.
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development: perseverance, independence, cooperation, confidence and managing frustration.

Assessment reminder

Age bands are indicative rather than fixed expectations. Children may demonstrate skills across several stages, and progression should be informed by individual development, interests and next steps.

The Construction Area should encourage open-ended exploration, purposeful building, creative thinking and resilience. Adults should extend children's thinking through carefully chosen questions and resources while allowing them to lead their own designs. Ensure construction materials are age-appropriate, well maintained and free from hazards; assess small parts, magnets, heavy blocks and long or unstable materials for suitability and supervise accordingly.