

Early Childhood Teacher interview questions

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What to expect

Early Childhood Teacher interviews typically focus on your understanding of the National Quality Framework, your ability to design and document play-based learning, and how you build relationships with children and families. Employers look for evidence of reflective practice and a genuine commitment to child safety.

- **Process:** Questions about your planning cycle, from observation to program design and evaluation.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for examples of how you've worked with families, managed challenging behaviour, or collaborated with colleagues.
- **Scenario:** Hypothetical situations involving child safety, inclusion, or unexpected changes to the daily routine.
- **Technical:** Questions that test your knowledge of the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standard.
- **Family-facing:** Questions about how you communicate with families and handle sensitive conversations.
- **Reflective:** Questions about your professional growth and how you use feedback to improve your practice.

The interview usually starts with a tour of the service and introductions, followed by a structured conversation with a centre director or panel. You might be asked to walk through a sample learning experience or discuss a portfolio of documentation. Expect a mix of behavioural questions and scenario-based questions, with time for your own questions at the end.

1. Can you walk me through how you plan a learning program for a group of children?

Why they ask

This shows your understanding of the planning cycle and how you use the Early Years Learning Framework.

How to structure your answer

Describe the cycle: observe children's interests, analyse observations against learning outcomes, plan experiences, implement with intentional teaching, and evaluate. Mention how you include children's voices and family input.

Example answer

"I start by observing children in their play, noting their interests and developmental stages. I use that to plan experiences that extend their learning, always linking back to the Early Years Learning Framework outcomes. For example, after noticing a group was fascinated by insects, I set up a discovery table with magnifying glasses and books, and we explored life cycles. I documented the children's questions and shared them with families, then planned a garden project to extend the learning. At the end of the week, I reflect on what worked and what to change next."

2. Tell me about a time you worked with a family who was concerned about their child's development.

Why they ask

Families are central partners. This tests your empathy, communication and ability to handle sensitive conversations.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result. Focus on how you listened, gathered evidence, and collaborated on a plan.

Example answer

"A parent once approached me worried that her son wasn't speaking as much as his peers. I listened without judgement and thanked her for sharing. I explained that I had also noticed some differences and suggested we observe him together over the next two weeks. I documented his communication during play and shared examples with her. We agreed to introduce some simple sign language and visual supports. I also connected her with a speech pathologist. Over time, his confidence grew, and she later told me she felt supported rather than judged."

3. What would you do if you noticed a child was missing during outdoor play?

Why they ask

Child safety is the highest priority. This tests your knowledge of supervision ratios and emergency procedures.

How to structure your answer

Stay calm. Follow your service's missing child policy: alert colleagues, secure the area, check designated zones, and account for all children. Then reflect and review.

Example answer

"First, I would remain calm and immediately alert my co-educator and the centre director. We would follow our missing child procedure: one educator stays with the group while others search the designated areas, starting with the most recent location and any hazards like gates or water. I would check the attendance record to confirm who is missing and keep the other children safe and supervised. Once the child is found, we would comfort them and then review what happened to prevent it recurring."

4. How do you use the Early Years Learning Framework in your daily practice?

Why they ask

This is a core regulatory and pedagogical document. Employers need to know you can apply it, not just recite it.

How to structure your answer

Define the framework's principles and outcomes briefly, then give a concrete example of how you embed it in planning and documentation.

Example answer

"The Early Years Learning Framework guides my planning through its principles, practices and learning outcomes. I use it to plan experiences that build on children's interests and to document their progress. For example, when children were building with blocks, I observed their teamwork and problem-solving, which linked to the outcome of children being connected and contributing. I then introduced a provocation with different materials to extend their thinking. I record these moments in each child's portfolio and share them with families, so the framework is visible in everyday practice."

5. Describe a time you collaborated with a colleague to improve a learning environment.

Why they ask

Early childhood educators work in teams. This shows your interpersonal skills and commitment to quality improvement.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, your role, the actions you took together, and the outcome for children or the service.

Example answer

“Our outdoor space felt cluttered and children were losing interest. I suggested to my co-educator that we redesign it with different zones for quiet play, physical challenge and nature exploration. We observed how children used the space, then together we moved equipment and added open-ended materials like logs and fabric. We also set up a mud kitchen. The children became more engaged and inventive in their play, and we noticed fewer conflicts over resources. We shared the changes with families in our newsletter and received positive feedback.”

6. How do you handle a situation where you disagree with a colleague about a child's behaviour management?

Why they ask

It tests your professionalism, conflict resolution and focus on the child's best interests.

How to structure your answer

Focus on the child first. Use respectful communication: listen to their perspective, refer to service policies and the National Quality Standard, and aim for a consistent approach. If needed, involve the director.

Example answer

“I would stay calm and avoid discussing it in front of the children. Later, I'd ask my colleague to talk privately, saying I wanted to understand their approach. I'd listen, then share my concerns and refer back to our behaviour guidance policy. We might agree to observe the child together and try a consistent strategy. If we couldn't agree, I'd ask the centre director for guidance. The most important thing is that the child experiences consistent, positive support.”