

## How to do a risk assessment

Often, when people think about 'doing a risk assessment' they imagine filling out a form listing the hazards including any substances or equipment being used, and then populating a grid with numbers that symbolise how dangerous each hazard is.

At CLEAPSS we do not believe in forms. Instead, think about risk assessment as a process that forms part of your planning;

*"I need to teach my children 'X', using 'Y' activity. What is the safest way to do this? What do I need to do for this to happen?"*

The law says that it is the employer's responsibility to provide its employees (you) with risk assessments and safety advice. As a member of CLEAPSS, your employer has devolved these tasks to us. This means we provide you with model risk assessments and safety guidance which are found in our resources.

But that's not quite enough. You also have a responsibility; you need to consider what we say about the activity/substance/equipment in relation to what you know about your children. In most cases this will simply mean doing what we suggest.

The process has 4 steps:



However, having read our advice, you may decide your children need extra support to remain safe. This is fine, and exemplifies how the process is essentially, about thinking.

## 1. Read

In most cases, information about hazards, and the safety measures you need to implement to reduce the risks during an activity, can be found in CLEAPSS guidance.

If you are using a particular material or wanting to do a particular activity, use the website search facility to find activity specific guidance. If you can't find an exact match the safety measures we've recommended in a similar activity may be suitable.



Use the search facility on the website



Example of general guidance

This doesn't mean you can't do an activity if it's not on the CLEAPSS website. Our general guidance in the **Doing things safely** area contains resources that provide the safety measures you might implement when using a variety of different equipment, materials and learning spaces.



If you can't find any guidance, use the Helpline to contact us. Before we can work out if you can do the activity safely, we'll need information about the:

- children
- details of the activity
- why you want to do the activity.

## 2. Think

When thinking about the safety measures to be implemented, you need to think about the children in your class. You may decide you need to increase the **level of supervision** by including an additional adult or by have a small number of children doing the activity whilst the rest of the class are doing independent work.

Plan how you will support children to use specific pieces of equipment and handle materials, eg modelling how to use it and how to behave/communicate while using it.

Generally primary STEAM resources are laid out on children's tables in trays. However, you may have to plan how your children collect/return some equipment or resources.

If your children are in a troublesome mood, eg after wet playtime, consider rescheduling a higher risk activity.





### 3. Record

Despite a risk assessment being a process rather than a form, you still need to record your safety measures. This shouldn't be arduous, you should record them in any way that helps you to ensure that they are carried out. For example:



These are just examples. The legislation says you can decide what works for you and your school.

#### 4. Do

Plan how to brief children about the safety measures and remember to carry out what you have planned to do.

For example, if you want to do a burning activity, one of the safety measures you will need to implement is that 'children need to stand up while burning'. Record this information in a way that helps you make sure you remember to tell the children to stand before they start the burning part of the activity.

Share your risk assessment with any other adults supporting the activity.



#### Is personal protective equipment (PPE) needed?

In primary science, if your risk assessment requires PPE in any form, for example, eye protection or safety gloves, then the rule of thumb is that the activity is probably not suitable for you to carry out in your classroom.

There may be a few exceptions for specific activities, where protective clothing is advised for example, gardening. Any such requirements are detailed in specific activity guidance.

However, protective clothing can also mean an apron to help keep you clean, and this may sometimes be a very good idea for both adults and the children. An old shirt, not too thin and not baggy, can be useful for protecting children's clothes. Make sure there are no loose pieces that can dangle over the activity.

In the unique situation that PPE is advised, for example with a child that has severe eczema or cuts, then the equipment must be the correct size for the child. Safety spectacles and gloves are available in smaller sizes from primary educational suppliers. Check also if children are allergic to latex in gloves.

#### Dealing with accidents

Teach children how to behave if something does go wrong. Involve them by discussing how they could react responsibly, and remind them periodically to help them remember.

For example, if you are using solid or liquid materials, plan what to do if a spill happens, eg have a dustpan and brush or paper towel/mop and bucket to wipe up. Before the activity starts, tell children what to do if they have a spill. Search **spills** for more detailed guidance.

When planning a higher risk activity, if possible, arrange the room's furniture so that it is not difficult to reach children and deal with an incident.

In the event of an accident, always follow your school's guidance.

If a child has got a material in their eye, in their mouth, on their skin or they inhale something and you are concerned it might be an issue, call the Helpline or ring 111 to reassure yourself or find out what to do next.

#### Demonstrations

Doing a demonstration is not a risk-free option and the children will learn and remember much more by doing an activity themselves. If you're going to do a demonstration, you will still need to do a risk assessment and make sure:

- the demonstration is quick (less than 5 minutes)
- that you've practiced the demonstration (including what you're going to say and when)
- you know how far away the children will need to be from the activity
  - will the children be able to see anything from this distance?
  - could the demo be watched via an interactive white board?
- you know what the children will get out of the demonstration
- you know what safety measures you need to put in place

#### Help is at hand

Alarm bells should ring if your risk assessments are taking a long time, are complicated, or, if when you read them, you can't pin-point actions that keep people safe. If you are unsure about how to make an activity safe for your class, or need reassurance that what you intend to do is safe, contact the Helpline.