

Getting back to playgroup

Staying safe, healthy and happy



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 **Playgroup
Victoria**

A message to you

We know the year 2020 has been difficult for many people; this is also true for playgroups.

Playgroups help connect parents with young children, providing time out for parents, children to play with other children, and families making friends for life.

We have been waiting for the time when playgroups can start again, and it seems the time is near.

There are many questions about how to prepare and what might need to be done differently at playgroup.

This booklet is to help you navigate through this.

The information in this booklet does not replace any official advice. It is intended to prompt you to think or ask about changes you might need to prepare for and implement so your playgroup is able to start again.

By following the step by step process in this booklet, and using the resources developed for this purpose, you and the families in your playgroup will have the best chance to come back together safely, healthy and happily.





Most importantly



We all need to do the following:

- Practice good hygiene
- Maintain physical distancing, keep at least 1.5 metres away from others
- Understand the risk and symptoms
- Help continue to slow the spread of COVID-19 by getting tested, even if you have mild symptoms
- Stay home and avoid contact if you or anyone else in your home are feeling unwell
- Take care wherever you go, assume others may be carrying the virus

[Find more information about how to stay safe and well here](#)

As you move through this booklet, you will find resources to use with your playgroup. By the end of the booklet, we hope that you will have a good picture of how your playgroup can start again and become a fun, caring and happy environment.

Let's chat

Playgroups work best when communication between families is a priority. All families appreciate knowing what is happening and when.

Parents, and children, will be wondering when they can all start meeting again, as well as having many other questions about how you will meet and what you will do.

Providing families with information to let them know you are preparing to return to playgroup can help to spark their interest and enthusiasm.

We have created fun and useful resources to help you let families know that your playgroup will be up and running again soon. [Check these resources out on page 19.](#)

As you learn new information, keep sharing it with your group.



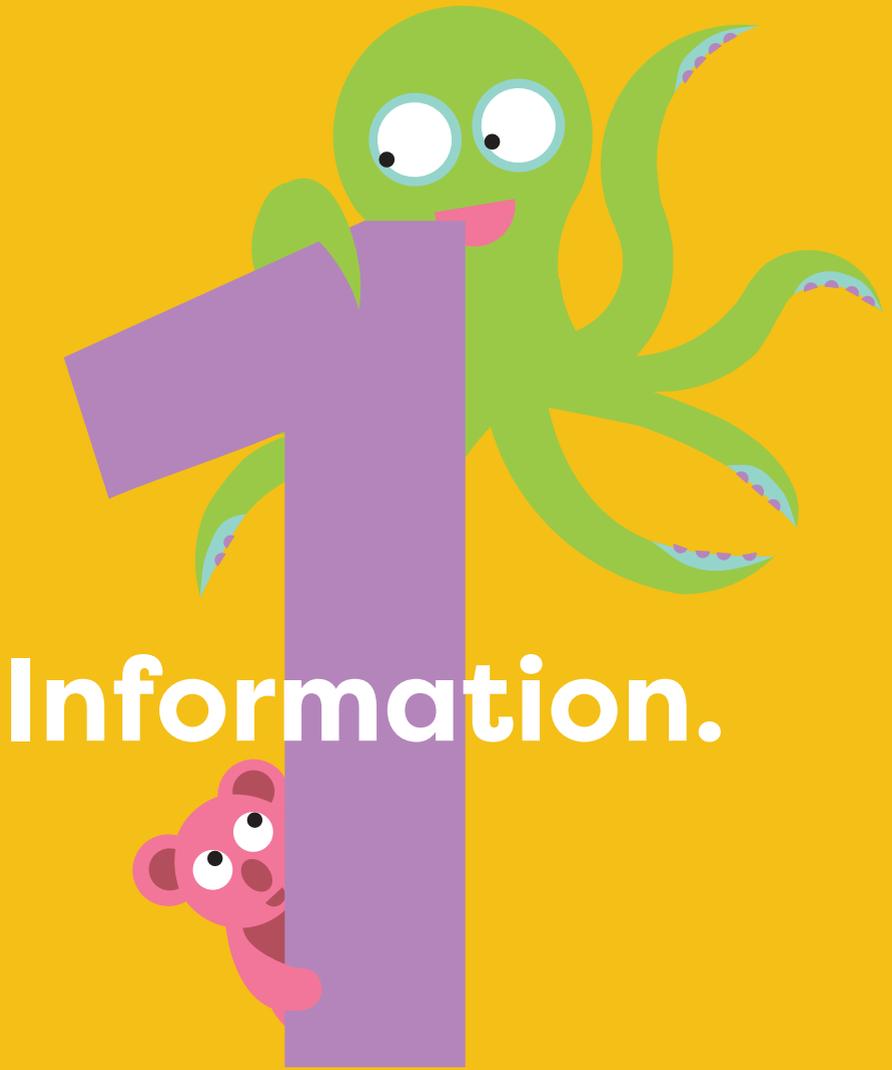


It's a process...

Information | Prepare | Ready | Play

This booklet has checklists and resources for you and your playgroup families to work through, as you gather the information you need to guide discussions and make decisions.







Where you meet

Playgroups meet in many different places; buildings, halls, homes, parks and schools.



Restrictions now apply to everywhere we go and meet, and it is important to understand how the restrictions may apply to your playgroup.

Venue providers have worked very hard to comply with new restrictions and protocols; some maybe further ahead than others in preparing for changes required of them. This means that playgroups will probably start at different times.

For your playgroup to recommence, you will need to contact the venue to find out:

1. When the venue will be available to your group
2. The number of people allowed in the area.

If your venue is ready for your playgroup to restart and the number of people allowed covers your membership numbers, go to page 9 to download the checklist.





Important Note

If the restrictions to the number of people who can gather has implications for your playgroup, it is important to have discussions with families about how to proceed.

This may require you to:

- Move your playgroup to another venue/meeting place
- Separate the group
- Delay the start of your playgroup until restrictions on numbers ease

These options may impact some families and relationships more than others. This is something to take seriously and act on cautiously.

It is therefore important to be considerate and thoughtful during these discussions.



Venue Requirements



Download the **the checklist** below to record information you gather about your venue.

Venue Requirements Checklist

Item	Changes	New Requirements
Your venue: 1. Availability 2. Restrictions on numbers	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Rental charges	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Changes to session time/s	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Entry/exit to procedures	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Attendance records	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Cleaning requirements	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Signage	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Food on premises	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Use of amenities 1. Kitchen 2. Toilets 3. Shared areas	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Use of venue equipment	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Hygiene & Infection control	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Storage of prams & belongings	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Waste & rubbish removal	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	

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Every playgroup is different!

Some of these points may not apply to your setting.

The following pages will provide you with suggestions about what you may need to ask your venue provider to prepare for your return to playgroup.



Rental changes

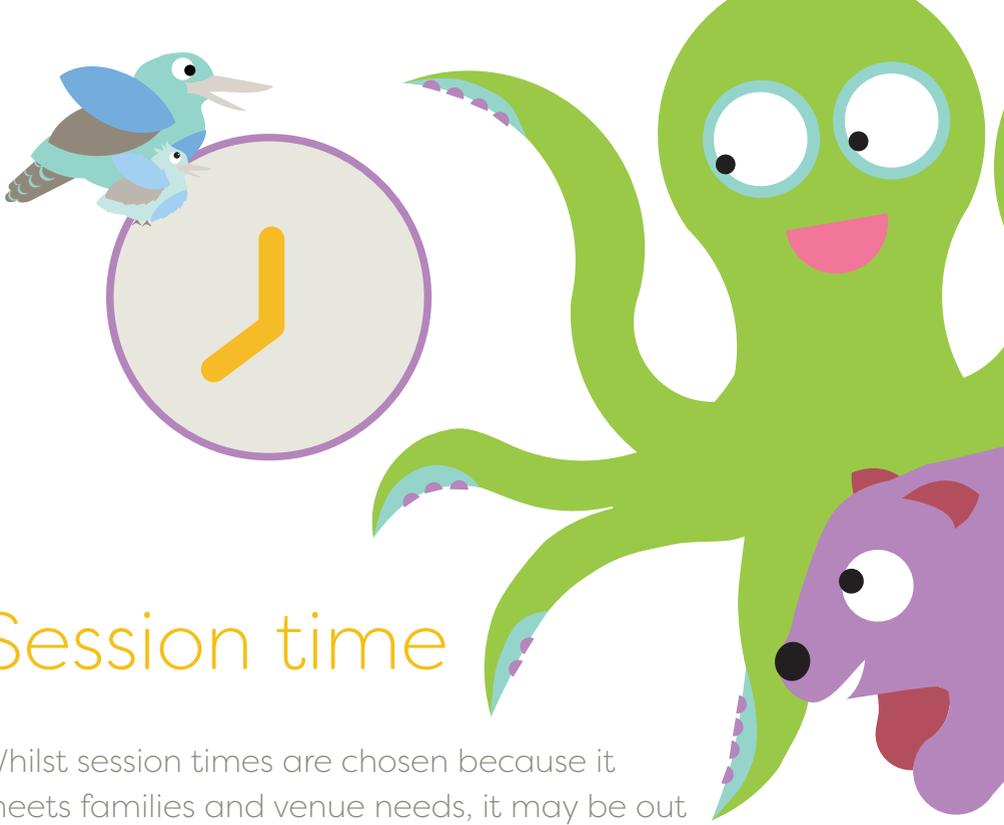
For those playgroups that pay rent, it is worthwhile asking about any changes anticipated, particularly if there is an increase.

It might be that there are no changes, however, even no change may affect your group's ability to pay if some families no longer attend.

It has been heartening to hear, however, that during this crisis, many councils and organizations have altered agreements to accommodate people's needs; this may be the case for where your playgroup meets.

Don't hesitate to enquire about this if your playgroup is faced with challenges to paying for your venue.





Session time

Whilst session times are chosen because it meets families and venue needs, it may be out of the control of the venue/facility where you meet to accommodate your session time.

This may be to do with restrictions on numbers of people, at one time in shared areas, or with the increased need for cleaning the venue and equipment between sessions.

Any changes to session times will impact your playgroup as you adapt in the coming months and may potentially impact some families' continued attendance at playgroup.

If this is the case, a discussion between families is important to find solutions to continue. There might be opportunities such as a different venue, at the same time, or meeting in a park. This might be an interim solution until restrictions allow increased numbers of people to meet.



Entry and exit

Arriving and departing playgroup can be challenging at the best of times! Excited little people wanting to see their friends and to play a myriad of activities.

Getting into and out of a venue may be a little different now.

Check with your venue about any new instructions to parking, entry doors and exit doors. If there are changes to this, ask the venue to provide you with written information so that you can forward this onto all the families at your playgroup. It may take a little time for parents to get to know the new routines so having the instructions written will help this proceed smoothly.

If the venue has not changed entry and exit routes, it is important for the playgroup families to remain vigilant regarding social distancing as they arrive and leave the playgroup.

Attendance records

On the road to recovery, many businesses, organisations, entertainment venues and community services are required to record attendance.

This is for the purpose of quickly tracing and tracking those who may have come in contact with any positive cases.

Check with your venue to find out if they are required to do this, and if so, what your playgroup will have to do. It may be that the venue will manage the attendance records themselves (such as registering upon entry to their venue) in which case, request written instructions from them to forward to all families in your playgroup.

If the venue requires your playgroup to manage this, make sure you check with them what you need to collect to ensure you comply with their requirements.



Have you downloaded the COVIDSafe App?
Click here to learn more.



Cleaning requirements

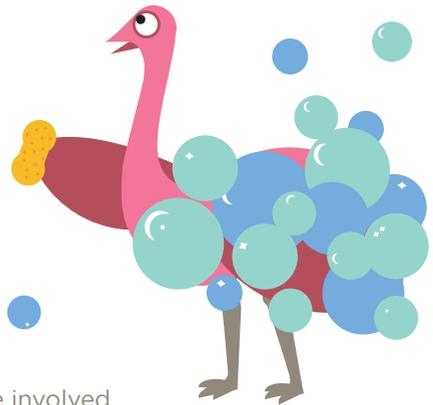
We now know that we all have a role to play to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Whether this be in our own home, out and about at the shops, in parks, or cafes, we are asked to ensure that adequate cleaning of facilities occurs.

By the time your meeting place is available to you, the venue provider will have undertaken an extensive review of their facilities and developed a plan to ensure appropriate and suitable levels of cleaning are undertaken.

Discuss with your venue provider their plans for cleaning including:

- Frequency of cleaning
- Timing of cleaning
- How cleaning is undertaken
- Materials used to clean facilities
- Communication about cleaning standards and issues
- Your playgroup's requirements

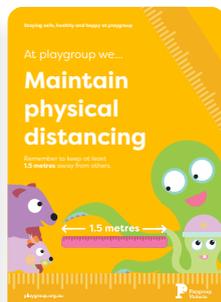
Some venues may require you to be more involved than others. It is important to be aware of your venue's requirements as soon as possible to ensure playgroup families are kept informed and understand and prepare to contribute to this.





Signs are everywhere informing us about social distancing, washing hands and staying home if we are sick. These are very important in maintaining people's awareness of how we need to conduct ourselves moving forward.

Ask your venue provider what signage they will be providing. If they require your playgroup to put up signage, ask for clarification about the content they require.



 We have produced a range of posters you may like to use. Click the images above to download.



Prepare.



What's next?

Asking the questions in the previous section puts your playgroup in a great position for families to be ready to get back. You now know what has and hasn't changed at the venue/facility where your playgroup meets.

From this information, there may well be some new habits families will need to adopt so that your playgroup is safe, healthy and happy.

Set up group meetings, either face to face or virtual, for families to discuss what changes will need to be made and how this will be done. Taking this approach also ensures all families can contribute to the solutions and the preparations to start the playgroup again.

Use the **venue requirements checklist** you filled in to guide discussions about how your playgroup may need to do things differently.





Ready.



Getting back to playgroup

Now you are ready to get back to playgroup its time to tell everyone! Keep messages consistent and make sure everyone knows what is going on.

We have created resources to help you with this. Below you will find a selection of social media tiles, as well a template you can fill out to easily let families know about any changes to your playgroup.

 Click on the images below to download the resources.

Social media tiles



Playgroup routine template



Our Playgroup Routine

Our group routine has changed slightly
This is how we run our playgroup

ACTIVITY	CHANGES TO HOW WE RUN OUR PLAYGROUP
Parking/Arrival	
Entering the room	
Signing in	
Set up	
Snack time	
Group time	
Packing up/cleaning	
Leaving playgroup	
New venue requirements	
Other notes	

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It's great to be back!

By being informed and prepared, your playgroup can continue to enjoy being together safe, healthy and happy.

The work you have done to find out if and how you might need to change how you operate, will help your playgroup start again as quickly and smoothly as possible for now.

Things change. Keep yourself and the group informed of any changes that may affect the running of your playgroup.

Work together and review how you run your playgroup on an ongoing basis.

Main message about play

Recently the Victorian Department of Education and Training provided Early Childhood services with a guide on particular activities used within their services. This advice can also be applied to the playgroup setting. They have advised the following:

Advice on sensory play - “The current health advice is that early childhood services can continue to safely engage in group sensory activities, with hand washing before and after such activities strongly recommended. There are no restrictions currently in place on the use of sandpits, digging patches, water play or playdough.”

Department of Education – Early childhood education coronavirus (COVID-19) update Thursday 11 June 2020

What does this mean?

Playing at playgroup does not change.

Children are able to play and socialize with other children as they were prior to COVID-19 restrictions.





Your playgroup can still use:

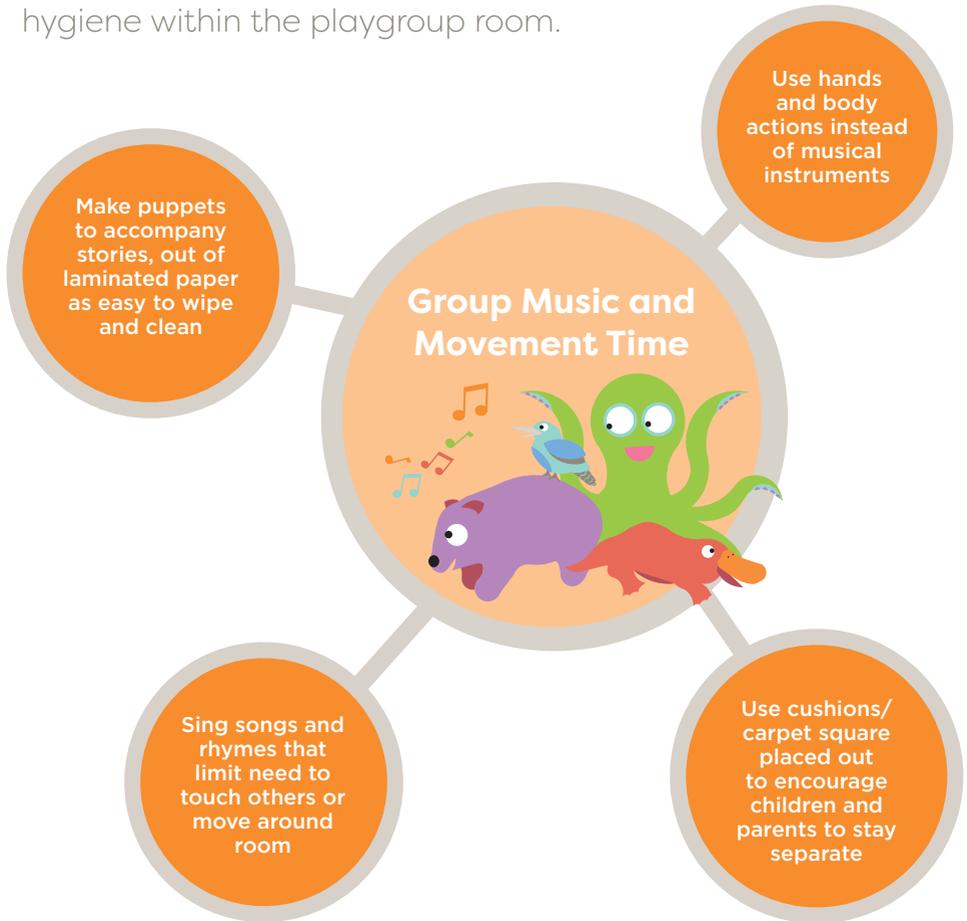
- Playdough
- Sand
- Water
- Paint
- Paintbrushes
- Books
- Musical instruments
- Dolls
- Trucks
- Swings and slides
- Snacktime (if venue allows)



The following pages have some ideas around set up to assist with social distancing for adults whilst at playgroup. 

In the room

Following social distancing between adults and having good hygiene habits are the best ways to help everyone stay healthy at playgroup. Adapting some activities and equipment available to the group may also help. The following pages will outline ways to enhance social distancing and hygiene within the playgroup room.



Remind everyone to wash hands before using playdough

Avoid activities that require children to use their mouths. e.g straws

Sensory



Use individual small tubs for water or sand play – easier to replace if need to

Use materials through zip lock bags for ease of cleaning. For example: shaving cream sealed in a ziplock bag and stuck to the table

Wash every art smock after use



Art and Craft

Consider multiple smaller pots of glue/paint available to limit sharing

Encourage hand washing before and after

In the room

Wash dress ups after each session

Consider using large boxes as a shop/cubby set up that can be thrown out and replaced often

Role Play



Consider limiting the use of bikes/trikes and wiping between uses

Consider a play kitchen set up using plastic plates, cups and utensils that can be washed or disposed of afterwards

Outdoor and Active Play



Use masking tape to create 'spaces' for equipment to remain

Encourage outdoor play even on cold days to allow fresh air and space

Allow an adult to serve children by using tongs

Use disposable cups and plates for children

Snack Time



Encourage parents to bring their own keep-cup or provide only disposable cups

Use a laminated placemat for each child - why not make this an art activity?

Remember to always practice good hygiene!



[Click here to learn the playgroup handwashing song!](#)

Following a playgroup session ask...

Am I, or we, catering for each child and family? Did the children:

P

Have plenty of **PHYSICAL** activities

L

Use and hear **LANGUAGE**

A

Have time to explore, **ANALYSE**, think and reason

Y

Have space to be alone, by **YOURSELF**

G

Have **GROUP** time with one, two or more friends

R

Enjoy **RHYTHM** and music

OU

Spend time **OUTDOORS** exploring nature or bringing nature indoors

P

PICTURE and imagine, then create or construct

Above all, was playgroup FUN?

If the answers are yes you can be assured that your playgroup is providing plenty of opportunities for learning through play.



Let's all wash our hands

Lyrics: N. Merzel, H. Rimington, A. Testro | Music: A. Testro & M. Girasole

At Playgroup we're a team
We laugh and play and dream
Off to the sink – the soap is pink
Together we stay clean

It's time to wash our hands
Let's all wash our hands
Water on – nice and strong
Like washing pots & pans

Now let's add some soap
Quite a lot of soap
Up and down – all around
Wow! That's a lot of soap!

When you wash your hands
If you're wonderin' for how long
Scrub along – nice and strong
Until we've sung this song

Now it's time to rinse
Watch all the bubbles go
Dry your hands – take your time
It's easy now you know!



[Click here to sing along to the hand washing song!](#)



**We are here
to support
you on your
journey...**



Where to get more support

Playgroup Victoria is here to help and support you in getting your group back together.

Find extra support by:

- **Contacting our office** and speaking to your local Playgroup Development Consultant
- **Registering your playgroup with us.** This gives you full access to The Playgroup Toolkit, themed activity booklets and other resources, plus free promotion on our website
- Joining our **Playgroup at Home Facebook group** to connect with other professionals and playgroups

Use The Playgroup Toolkit

Access a wealth of playgroup information, tools and resources all in one place. The Playgroup Toolkit has been designed and developed to support your playgroup.

Login [HERE](#) to access

[Not a Playgroup Victoria member yet? Click \[HERE\]\(#\) to join today!](#)

Useful local supports

Your local council
The Maternal and Child Health Team
Your venue operator

Department of Health and Human Services

Connect with us!

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