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# To Nurture Pressure



Online Version



Department of Health

# To Nurture or To Pressure

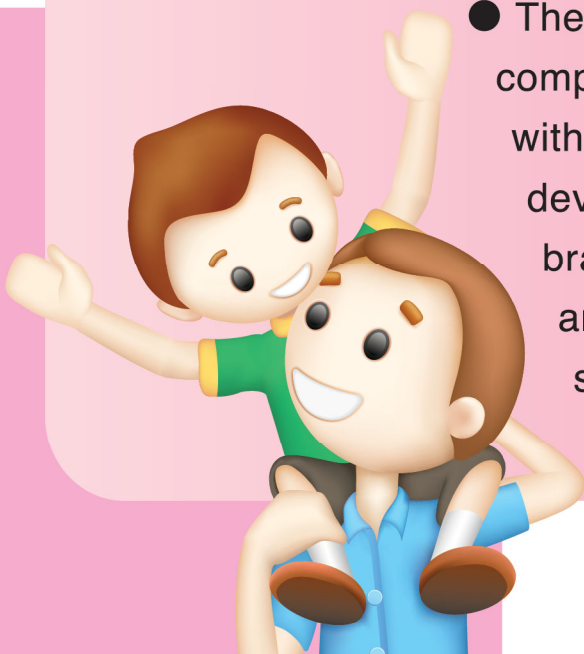


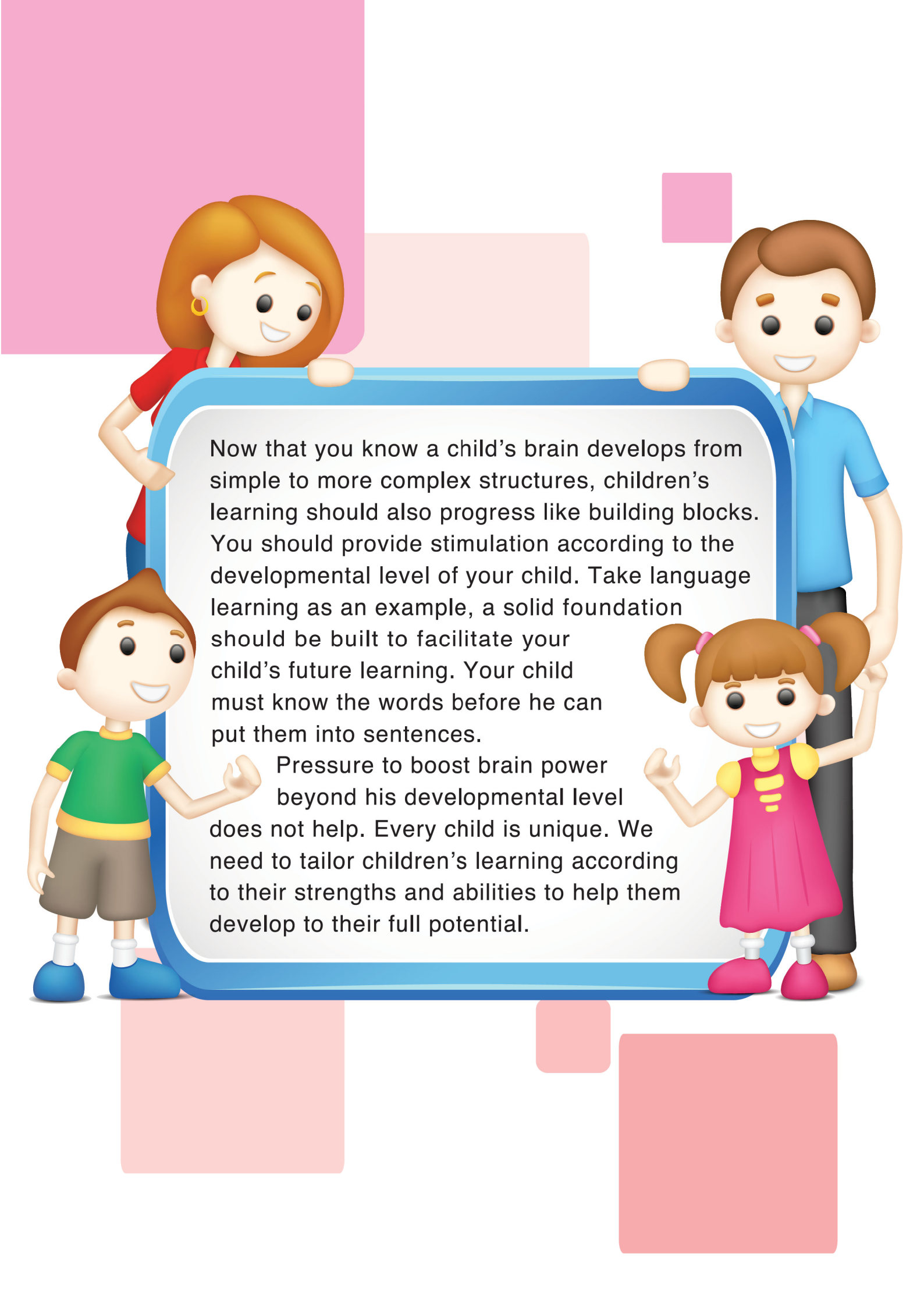
Parents nowadays are eager to be sure their children are well prepared for success in education. However, it is also true that putting too much pressure on our children too soon may do more harm than good for their development.

## Brain Development: the Basics

Knowing how a child's brain develops is essential to facilitate a child to learn.

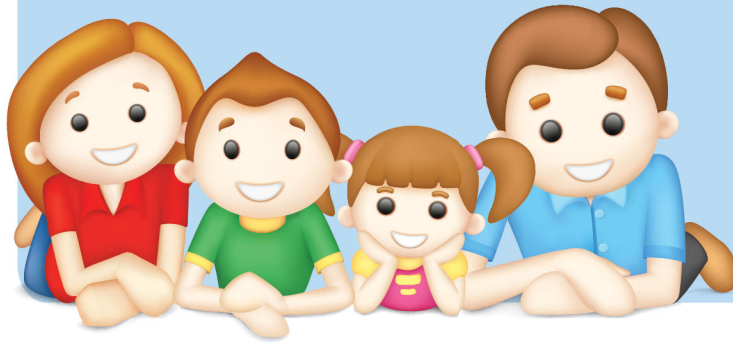
- A healthy and all-round brain development is very important because the brain governs bodily functions, thoughts and behaviour.
- Innate and environmental factors are inter-related and they are both essential for healthy brain development. While innate factors, such as genes and environment for foetal growth cannot be changed after the child is born, environmental factors can be modified. The environmental factors basic to brain development include providing children with appropriate nutrition, positive parent-child relationship and a stable and secure home environment.
- The neural circuits of the brain become more complex in structure and efficient in function with a child's growth. The brain continues to develop till early adulthood. The most rapid brain development occurs between birth and age three but learning in children is still efficient after three.





Now that you know a child's brain develops from simple to more complex structures, children's learning should also progress like building blocks. You should provide stimulation according to the developmental level of your child. Take language learning as an example, a solid foundation should be built to facilitate your child's future learning. Your child must know the words before he can put them into sentences.

Pressure to boost brain power beyond his developmental level does not help. Every child is unique. We need to tailor children's learning according to their strengths and abilities to help them develop to their full potential.



## What About Talent Classes and Training Classes?



Talent classes and training classes are quite popular in Hong Kong. However, most of the claimed effectiveness is merely due to temporary training effects which have weak scientific back-up and should not be interpreted as enhancement in children's brain development. For a newly learned skill to be long-lasting, it has to be practised often in daily life. For example, learning a foreign language without using it on daily basis would not be meaningful.

Over-training and overscheduling a child's learning may neglect the basic needs of a child, resulting in a series of negative effects:

- Less chance for **parent-child interaction** – On top of that, parent-child conflicts may even occur if the child does not wish to take the classes. A positive parent-child relationship is essential for child development including the development of emotional regulation and social skills.
- Loss of **fun and satisfaction in learning** – children may lose learning motivation in the long run which may in turn affect their learning and development.
- Less time for **rest and play** – Stress may build up with inadequate time to relax.
- Unbalanced **development** – Children may lack the opportunities to develop other essential abilities like exploration, independence, problem-solving, social skills and emotional control.



## Is IQ Testing Necessary?



Many parents have considered having their children's intelligence assessed. Some may think an IQ (intelligence quotient) can give them a glimpse into their children's abilities and help them better plan their children's education. Others may be eager to confirm their children's giftedness through testing so that they would not lose any time to help their children's talents bloom. Before you decide to give your child an IQ test, consider the following:

- IQ tests measure, in a standardized manner, an individual's cognitive abilities such as comprehension, problem solving, memory, and processing speed. They, however, do not take into account many other abilities such as creativity, leadership and emotional regulation.
- To assess if a child has gifted intelligence, he will need to have an IQ in the Very Superior range as well as extraordinary achievements or qualities in other aspects.
- Due to the rapid changes in the developing brain and the generally fluctuating performance in the young preschoolers, the result of an IQ test on young children may not reflect their intellectual potential reliably. In fact, IQ tests are not recommended for preschoolers unless they have difficulties in learning or in social adjustment.
- The Education Bureau and the Department of Health in Hong Kong do not provide routine IQ testing to solely assess giftedness in children.
- IQ tests should be carried out only by qualified psychologists, such as educational or clinical psychologists who have received relevant training.

As IQ testing has limitations, parents placing too much emphasis on IQ may overlook their children's aptitude for other areas of development. It may also bring unnecessary stresses to both the parents and the child.

# You are the Best Facilitator for Your Child



- According to the theory of multiple intelligences proposed by Professor Howard Gardner of the Harvard University, children can have various abilities apart from those indicated from school performance and IQ test results. These abilities include musical, interpersonal, bodily, naturalistic and intrapersonal etc.
- You know your child best as a parent. Do spend some time to observe and discover your child's abilities and qualities. You may arrange activities for him accordingly to realise your child's full potentials through fun and challenges.



- Just daily parent-child play and activities provide your child with diverse opportunities in learning and development. For example, while potting a plant with your child, you may encourage him to fill in the soil (bodily), count the leaves (logical-mathematical), describe the whole process (verbal) and draw the plant (spatial and artistic), as well as observe the growth of the plant over time (naturalistic). The fruitfulness of such parent-child interaction is more than what can be achieved through training classes. You may save your child from early training classes.

If you have any concerns related to your child's development, discuss with the nurses or doctors at any MCHC or related professionals.

## Further Readings :



Leaflets on Child Development, Family Health Service, Department of Health

<http://s.fhs.gov.hk/rn7ut>



FAQ, Child Assessment Service, Department of Health

<https://www.dhcas.gov.hk/en/faq.html>

Gifted Education - Questions & Answers, Education Bureau

<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/gifted/index.html>

Parenting Tips: Getting to Know Your Gifted Child and Gifted Education in Hong Kong, Education Bureau

[https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/gifted/resources\\_and\\_support/others/parent.html](https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/curriculum-area/gifted/resources_and_support/others/parent.html)

FAQ, The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education

<http://ge.hkage.org.hk/en/parents/faq>

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/activities/council/>



**Family Health Service**

**Website: [www.fhs.gov.hk](http://www.fhs.gov.hk)**

**24-hour Information Hotline: 21129900**