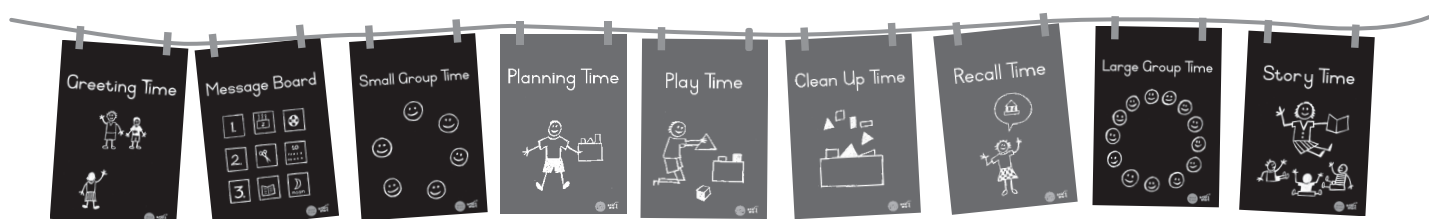


# Using your theme plans

Play for children is like the air that we breathe.

It is the best way for them to learn and make sense of the world.

As SmartStarters we need to create a stimulating environment for children to play and learn. The SmartStart Daily routine helps us create that environment.



To make space where children play freely and learn, WE NEED TO PLAN every day for Message Board, Small and Large Group Activities, Story Sharing time and other activities. **To help children learn, it is good to choose a THEME to organize your weekly or monthly plans around.**

The SmartStart curriculum provides activities and stories for 10 THEMES, each with a theme plan to help you by providing ideas and inspiration, and helping make sure that there is a good flow that connects the activities with the themes - while also covering all the holistic development areas.

These plans are meant as a support for your work and to provide you with great ideas, wonderful stories and stimulating activities so that you can connect with your children. However, feel free to add and change plans that best suit your children - you can also choose your own theme and activities!



We have created 4 weeks of plans for each of the 10 themes. When you plan for the month, you will need:

- ✓ The month's theme booklet
- ✓ The month's theme Story book
- ✓ Paper to plan
- ✓ Your SmartStart Small and Large Group Activities book
- ✓ The month's theme Home Story packs

## \* INCLUDED IN EACH THEME PACK

### THE 8-PAGE THEME BOOKLET

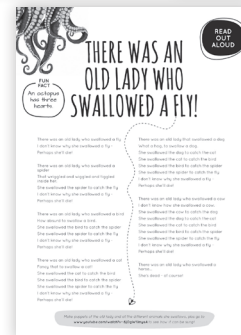
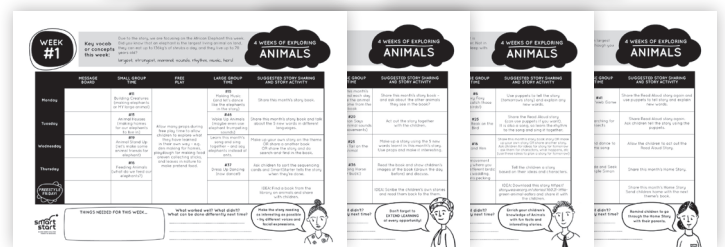
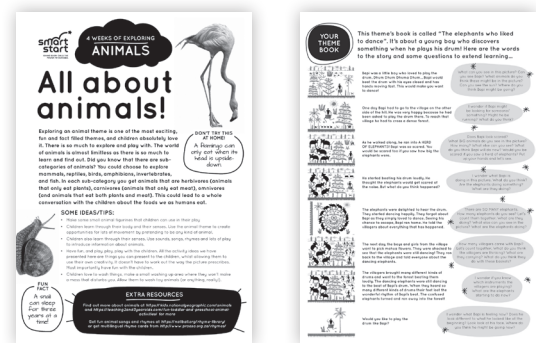
PAGE 1: Each theme plan starts with interesting facts and ideas about the theme. There are links to additional resources and stories.

PAGE 2: This page has the WORDS for the Story Book. It includes open-ended questions you can ask before, during and after the story. Remember story sharing should be a free-flowing time, so allow children to engage and talk without there being a need for right or wrong answers.

PAGES 3-6: This is four weeks of ideas divided into specific activities for each day found in your SmartStart Small and Large Group Activities book. You may change these if you have other ideas - the intention is to provide you with guidelines. Every week has plans for four days. The fifth day is left free for you to plan yourself - either to repeat activities the children enjoyed or were still working on, or to do other activities. Free play suggestions have also been given.

PAGE 7: A Read Aloud Story to share with children

PAGE 8: A song or rhyme for the month



### THEME STORYBOOK

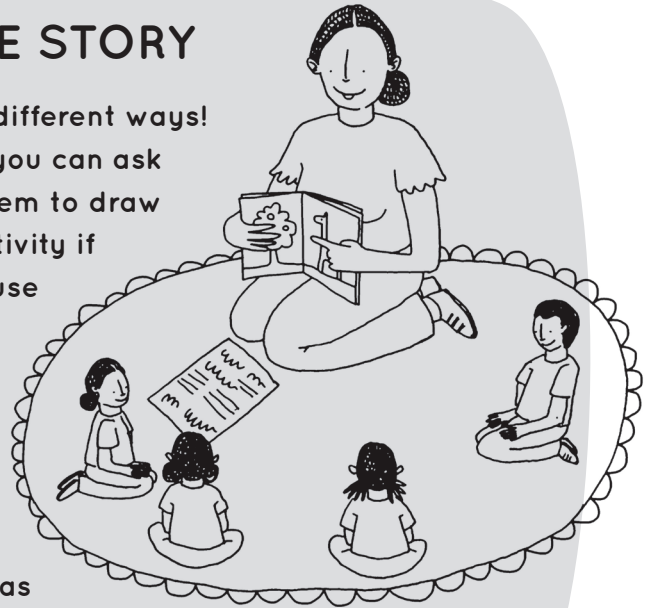
Each theme comes with a Theme Storybook. **The books do not have the story words printed in them - these words are printed on the second page of your theme plan. Have this NEXT to you when you read your story.** The first and last pages of the Storybook give more suggestions on how to extend learning with the children: **Let's talk, Let's find** and **Let's do**. Use these when you have time with children - for small or large groups, or even with an individual child. *Don't do these at the same time as the questions in the theme booklet, as it will get too long and children will lose interest.*



## \* SHARING THE THEME STORY

You can and should share the story in many different ways!

You can read it, you can act it with props, you can ask children to tell you the story, you can ask them to draw pictures, and you can do the story cards activity if there is one for the month. You don't have to use the same story for all four weeks - both you and the children will get bored of it. Read it as many times as is interesting for the children. You can also make up your own stories, tell stories from your own childhood, or find books from the library that are linked to the theme. Use ideas that are in the story as well the children's interests that arise during these discussions to extend their learning and plan activities. **MOST IMPORTANTLY, enjoy your time with the children and being together!**



### STORY CARDS/ MATCHING CARDS

Each theme comes with a set of cards. Stick these onto hard cardboard and then cut them out to use with children

USING STORY CARDS: These cards show the Theme story. Ask children to try and put them in the right order – you can ask them What comes next? Or give them to children to tell the story in their own way? What is happening here? What do you see?

USING MATCHING CARDS: some of the themes have matching cards. Put these in your toys and games sections or use them to do small group activities. Matching activities help children develop cognitive skills and improve language and concentration. You can help children develop these skills by playing with them, asking questions and pointing out numbers and pictures on the cards.



### READ ALOUD STORY

The Read Aloud story is for you to share with children and it has a set of puppets to go with it. Cut out the puppets and stick them to toilet roll to make your set for you to use in creative ways. You can:

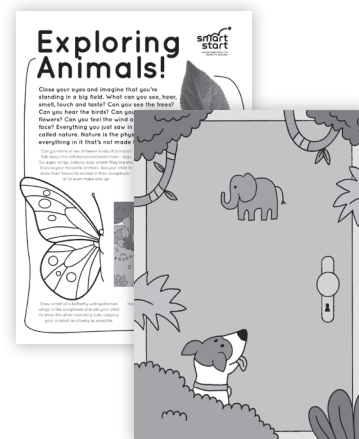
- read the story and show the puppets,
- retell the story only using puppets,
- ask children to use the puppets to retell the story (in their own way). Remember they don't need to get the story right, they can make up their own stories just using the characters – let this be a fun experience for all of you.



## HOME STORY PACKS

The home story books are designed to connect your programme with the child's home and their parents and/or caregivers. Each home pack consists of a wordless storybook (that they fold and make together), an activity sheet, and a scrapbook (that they use all year to work in). The stories are connected to the different themes and provide 'talking points' at home about what you are doing in your groups. It is a way for the children to connect with adults or older siblings at home using a story.

**At the beginning of every month, make sure you give each child the Home Story pack linked to the upcoming month's theme.**



## \* PLANNING, PLANNING, AND MORE PLANNING!

Although the theme plans suggest activities every day, you will still need to plan! You will need to find the materials for your Small and Large Group Activities, plan your story time, find books and plan your Message Board activities. We suggest you design three themes for each term:

- ✓ Go through all three themes in the Small and Large Group Activity book and make a list of all the things you need for the activities.
- ✓ Next, use your theme booklet to check which activities are relevant for each week, and then plan these for the month.
- ✓ You now have a detailed plan for each term, each month, and each week. Ask your parents and families to start collecting items you need for the themes.

Once you have a good plan in place, and your children are playing, busy, and stimulated, you will begin to see how easy it is. You will find it easy to participate in their play and observe the children to see what else you need to do to support their development.



- \* Clubs are a great way to plan for your themes. You can provide support for each other and when you are struggling you will get ideas and inspiration from your club members.
- \* You can also talk about all the things that are challenging for you and solve these together.



For each theme, look for relevant pictures from magazines, newspapers, etc and hang them around your space. You can also add things to your Free Play space. This means that children have many things to talk about and see that are linked to the month's theme.