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## Ngā panga | Puzzles

Puzzles develop important cognitive skills and dispositions, including problem-solving, patience, and persistence. The experience of matching shapes and colours can be challenging yet rewarding. It can build children's confidence, boost self-esteem, and can offer a sense of accomplishment.

### Links to Te Whāriki

When playing with puzzles, tamariki use a range of strategies for active exploration, thinking, and reasoning (**Exploration | Mana aotūroa**). Puzzles can also support the **Communication | Mana reo** strand as children experience the symbols of their culture including that of numbers and other mathematical concepts, letters, and images.



Te Tāhuhu o  
te Mātauranga  
Ministry of Education



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### **Puzzle play can help tamariki to:**

- › practise problem-solving, spatial awareness, and logical thinking
- › develop hand-eye coordination and dexterity
- › learn to reason and solve problems
- › learn to persevere, deal with frustration, and be patient.

### **Adults can support tamariki by:**

- › taking an interest and following the child's lead
- › allowing them to do puzzles at their own pace
- › helping tamariki to notice shapes, colours, and patterns
- › providing prompts and questions to encourage critical thinking and problem solving
- › talking tamariki through their frustrations and encouraging them to persist.

### **Providing for puzzles**

Set up a dedicated area or table for puzzles to create a comfortable and inviting space for tamariki. Keep it tidy and organised. Tamariki can work on the floor or at a low table. Display puzzles so that they are easy to reach, and tamariki can select puzzles independently. Set up puzzle play to allow for both independent and cooperative play. Taking photos of completed puzzles and keeping these in a clear file or laminating them can help tamariki to solve the puzzle they are working on.

### **Ideas for puzzles**

Provide a range of puzzles with varying levels of difficulty, cultural symbols and images, and different themes to suit the interests and abilities of each child including:

- › one piece to multi-piece
- › from simple to difficult to challenging
- › showing a range of subjects and patterns.