

# Making Children's Rights Real

Learning Activities and Actions on  
Children's Rights for Children in  
**Junior Infants and Senior Infants**



**ombudsman  
do leanaí  
for children**



Children Now, Rights Now



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## Dear Principal and Teacher,

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As Ombudsman for Children, one of my roles is to promote awareness of children's rights, including among children and young people and including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Making Children's Rights Real materials aim to assist you to explore children's rights with your students in the context of curriculum teaching and learning. The materials have been developed by an experienced team of educationalists at the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Dublin City University. I would like to thank Professor Fionnuala Waldron, Brian Ruane, Dr Benjamin Mallon, Rowan Oberman and Dr Seline Keating for their work to devise the materials.

People sometimes ask us where children's rights are defined. Two key reference points are the Constitution, which is the primary legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is a set of internationally agreed human rights standards.

Ireland ratified the UNCRC in 1992. By doing so, Ireland made a commitment under international law to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children set out in Convention, without discrimination. 2017 is the 25th anniversary of this important commitment by the State to work towards making children's rights under the UNCRC a reality in the daily lives of children and young people living in Ireland.

In 2016, we undertook a consultation called Tune In, which sought children and young people's views on how they would like the OCO to go about raising awareness of children's rights among children and young people into the future. School was most frequently identified as the place where children and young people want to get information about children's rights. Teachers, together with parents/guardians, were most frequently identified as the people children and young people trust and are happy to receive information about children's rights from.

In light of these results and in the context of this important 25th anniversary year, I am delighted that we can make the Making Children's Rights Real suite of materials available to schools. I hope the materials will support your work and that you and your students will find the materials educational and enjoyable.

The materials include an important focus on supporting children and young people to implement an action for children's rights (see Activity 3). We would be delighted if you could tell us about any action you take by emailing us at [education@oco.ie](mailto:education@oco.ie) or by linking in with us on Twitter (@OCO\_ireland), Facebook (@OCOireland) or Instagram (@ombudsmanforchildren).

Many thanks,



**Niall Muldoon**

Ombudsman for Children  
2017



# How to use these Materials: Information for Teachers

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## Introduction to these materials

These materials have been developed for the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) by the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Dublin City University, to support children in Junior and Senior Infants (children approximately 4 to 6 years old) to explore and take action in relation to children's rights.

## Activities

This resource includes three activities:

- **Activity 1 – What children need to be happy**  
Using a range of images, this activity supports children to explore what they and other children need to be happy. It introduces children to the concept of children's rights and to the idea that children's rights are for all children.
- **Activity 2 – Who helps protect children's rights?**  
This activity supports children to consider who might have a role to play in helping to protect and fulfil children's rights.
- **Activity 3 – Action! Thumbs up for children's rights**  
This activity outlines an action that you can support the children in your class to take to raise awareness of children's rights among other children as well as parents/guardians and school staff.

## Accompanying resources and materials

The resources developed for use during the three activities can be found at the end of this pack and are numbered to assist identification. **Slideshows** of each of these resources, as well as a poster about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, are available on the OCO's website.

The OCO's website also provides a **Support File for Teachers**, which contains supplementary information, including a number of fact files, a glossary of terms relevant to children's rights, and links to several websites, which offer additional information that might inform your work to develop classroom and whole school approaches to children's rights education.

## Educational Principles and Approach

There are five sets of materials belonging to Making Children's Rights Real, each of which is focused on a particular age group of children and young people. The materials have been developed using a spiralled approach to educational planning. While the activities have been developed for specific age groups and can be used as standalone activities or run across a number of lessons, there are a number of key principles which underpin all of the materials. These principles include the importance of raising children and young people's awareness and understanding of their rights; affording children and young people opportunities to express their views and to take part in decision-making; and supporting children and young people to take age-appropriate action to influence and effect change.

## Links to Aistear and the Primary Curriculum

If you are an educator in an early childhood setting or a primary school teacher, these materials will support your work to deliver several elements of Aistear, including Well-being, and of the Primary Curriculum, including Social, Personal and Health Education.

## Activity 1: What Children need to be Happy

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### Purpose:

To introduce the children to:

- the idea of rights and children's rights
- the idea that children's rights apply to them
- the idea that children's rights apply to all children everywhere

### Guiding questions:

- What are rights?
- What are children's rights?
- Do all children have rights?

### Learning outcomes:

Today we will learn about:

- deciding what is fair and what is unfair
- how having rights can help to make children's lives better
- what rights we think are important

### What you need:

- Paper and drawing materials
- Illustrations of Unfair Situations (Resource 1)
- Illustrations of Children's Rights (Resource 2)
- Illustrations of Children's Rights - Words and Images (Resource 3)

## Steps

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### Start by: Thinking about what we need to be happy

1. Ask each child to draw a picture of themselves and to write their name beside their picture (or write their names for them, as appropriate).
2. Support the children to discuss what they need to have happy lives (their suggestions might include having people who care about them, food to eat, a home to live in, opportunities to play, etc.). Encourage the children to draw on a wide range of ideas – for example, if they are focusing on play, you might encourage the children to think about other needs they have such as having food, having clean water to drink and for washing, being able to get healthcare if they are sick, having someone to care for them, being safe, etc.

3. Support the children to focus on and illustrate their shared ideas. Create a display with the children, which places their self-portraits at the centre and surrounds these self-portraits with the children's illustrations of what they feel they need to be happy.

### **Develop by: Thinking about rights**

4. Display the Illustrations of Unfair Situations (Resource 1) on the whiteboard. Ask the children what they think needs to change in each picture to make the child in each picture happy. Support the children to relate these images to their own illustrations and to use the terms 'fair' and 'unfair' to discuss them.
5. Ask the children whether they think that things should be fair for all children and why? Introduce the word 'right' and explain it with reference to the illustrations – for example, use the image of a child with very little food to introduce children's right to food.

### **Finish by: Thinking about who has rights**

6. Show the children the Illustrations of Children's Rights (Resource 2 in this resource or the accompanying powerpoint presentation). Through discussion of the images, support the children to identify what right is represented in the illustration. You might like to use Illustrations of Children's Rights - Words and Images (Resource 3) for your own reference in this regard.
7. Introduce the children to the idea that all children have the same rights because they are all human beings and explain that these rights have been agreed by people around the world.
8. Support the children to reflect on the questions 'What have we learned?' and 'What would we like to learn more about?'

### **Suggestions for adapting the activity:**

- If you wish and as appropriate, ask the children to bring in an image of themselves or of something that represents them rather than to draw a picture of themselves.
- This activity can be tailored for different contexts and age groups by increasing/ decreasing the number of rights introduced to the children in response to their discussions. In cases where certain rights that children have might not arise naturally through the children's discussions of what they need to be happy, you could draw on Resource 3 or Resource 4 to support their discussion.

## Activity 2: Who helps protect Children's Rights?

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### Purpose:

To introduce the children to:

- the idea that a range of different people and organisations can help to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights
- the idea that everyone can contribute to creating a culture that respects children's rights

### Guiding questions:

- Which individuals and groups can help to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights?
- What kinds of things can we all do to create a culture that respects children's rights?

### Learning outcomes:

Today we will learn about:

- who helps to make sure children experience their rights
- things we can do to respect each other's rights

### What you need:

- Illustrations of Unfair Situations (Resource 1)
- Illustrations of Children's Rights - Words and Images (Resource 3)

## Steps

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### Start by: Thinking about what rights are important to us

1. Building on Activity 1 and using the Illustrations of Children's Rights - Words and Images (Resource 3), support the children to briefly recap what rights children have and to discuss what rights are important to them.

### Develop by: Thinking about who can help to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights

2. Show the class the Illustrations of Unfair Situations (Resource 1 in this resource or the accompanying powerpoint presentation).
3. Divide the children into groups of at least four and give each group one of the illustrations, so that each group has a different illustration. Clarify with each group that they know which right their illustration relates to.

Illustration of a child with little food	The right to food
Illustration of a child in a children's playground covered in glass and rubbish	The right to play
Illustration of a child in the cold without shelter	The right to a home
Illustration of a child looking at a dirty glass of water	The right to clean water
Illustration of a child being told to 'Shhhhh!' by an adult	The right to be heard
Illustration of a child who is unable to get into school	The right to education
Illustration of a child who is sick	The right to healthcare

4. Ask the children to talk together in their groups about the different adults who they think could help the child in the illustration they are looking at to experience the right the illustration relates to.
5. Ask the children to draw a picture of one of the adults they have identified. (You could give each group a template/outline of an adult to support their drawing, if appropriate).
6. Ask each group of children to share their ideas and drawings with the rest of the class. As appropriate, use questions and prompts to encourage the children to go beyond the adults they have named and to consider roles (e.g. parent/guardian, teacher, doctor, garda) and organisations (e.g. schools, the gardaí, hospitals).

### Finish by: Thinking about how we can help

**Note for Teachers:** Children can be introduced to the idea that we all need to respect each other's rights. This should be distinguished from the idea of being responsible for making children's rights real, which is primarily the State's role.

7. Each of the drawings created by the children can be developed into a montage of 'Adults who support Children's Rights' or clustered around print outs of the relevant 'Illustrations of Children's Rights' (Resource 3)
8. Support the children to discuss the question 'How can we help children to experience children's rights?', with reference to a number of different rights (e.g. education, play, being heard) and contexts in which these rights arise (e.g. school, the local community, home, local club).
9. Support children to reflect on the questions 'What have we learned?' and 'What would we like to learn more about?'



### **Suggestion for adapting the activity:**

As appropriate, the focus of the children's discussions could be adapted to explore actions that could help implement children's rights in a particular context (e.g. the classroom) or actions that could help implement a particular right children have (e.g. the right to play) at local community level.

### **Suggestion for extending the activity:**

Identify an adult whose role has been discussed by the children as being connected with children's rights – for example, parent/guardian, garda, nurse, doctor, parent, sports coach, SNA, school bus driver, etc. Invite the adult to visit the class to talk to the children about their role and how it relates to children's lives. Encourage the children to share their learning about children's rights with the adult and facilitate a discussion on how the adult's role can support children's rights. As appropriate, the children might create a certificate to recognise the adult as a 'children's rights champion'. If feasible, you could invite more than one adult in to visit the class in this way.

## Activity 3: Action: Thumbs up for Children's Rights!

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### Purpose:

- To help children reflect on what rights are important for them now
- To introduce the idea that everyone should know about children's rights

### Guiding questions:

- How can we tell people about children's rights?
- How can we tell people about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

### Learning outcomes:

As an action, we will:

- help others to know about children's rights

### What you need:

- Illustrations of Unfair Situations (Resource 1)
- Illustrations of Children's Rights (Resource 2)
- Images illustrating children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Resource 4)
- Children's paints for thumbprints

## Steps

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### Start by: Thinking about ways of helping others to learn about children's rights

1. Discuss with the children different ways we can help others to learn about children's rights. Suggest the option of creating a 'Thumbs Up for Children's Rights' class poster to display in the school where other children and adults can see it.
2. Ask the children for ideas on how to illustrate the poster. Two options you could discuss with the class in this regard are:
  - Revisit the Illustrations of Children's Rights (Resource 2) and support the children to create their own equivalent illustrations and bring these together as a large poster.
  - Revisit the images illustrating children's rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Resource 4) and support the children to add words associated with the different rights, as appropriate.

### Develop by: Thumbs up for Children's Rights

3. Within a space on the poster the children have created, invite the children to put their thumbprints using the children's paints.

## **Finish by: Telling other people about children's rights**

4. Support children to present their 'Thumbs up for Children's Rights' poster to others in the school and community – for example, by displaying it somewhere in the school where everyone will see it or by presenting it at a school assembly or a whole-school celebration of children's rights.

### **Suggestion for adapting the activity:**

This action can be part of a wider celebration of children's rights, with a whole-school 'Thumbs up for Children's Rights' poster being thumb-printed by the whole school or by a representative from each class, parents and staff in the school.

### **Suggestion for extending the activity:**

Some of the adults identified during Activity 2 could be invited to express their commitment to children's rights by adding their thumbprints to the poster.

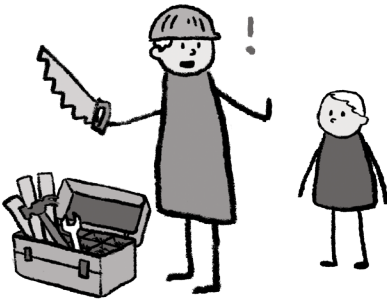
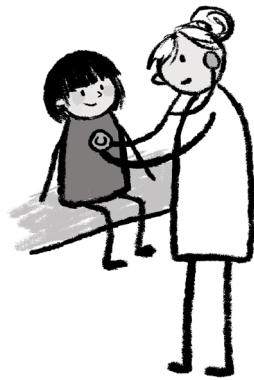
Resource 1: Illustrations of unfair situations



Resource 2: Illustrations of children's rights

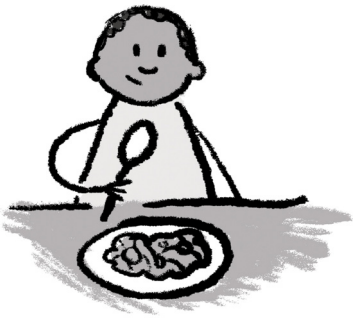


## Resource 2: Illustrations of children's rights





## Resource 3: Illustrations of children's rights: Words and images



food



education



play and rest



a name



a home



clothes



family and care



clean water



having a say and being listened to



being alive



doing what's best for children



expressing yourself

## Resource 3: Illustrations of children's rights: Words and images



being treated fairly by the law



healthcare



getting information



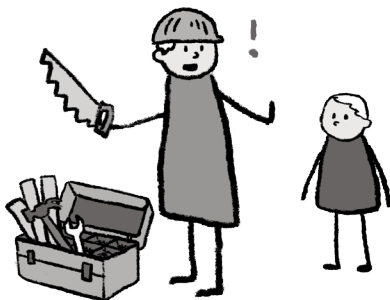
a nationality



privacy



protection from war



protection from work that harms you



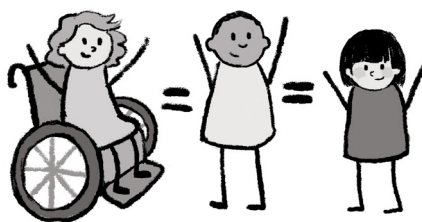
knowing your rights and responsibilities



being safe



developing your talents and abilities



all different, all equal



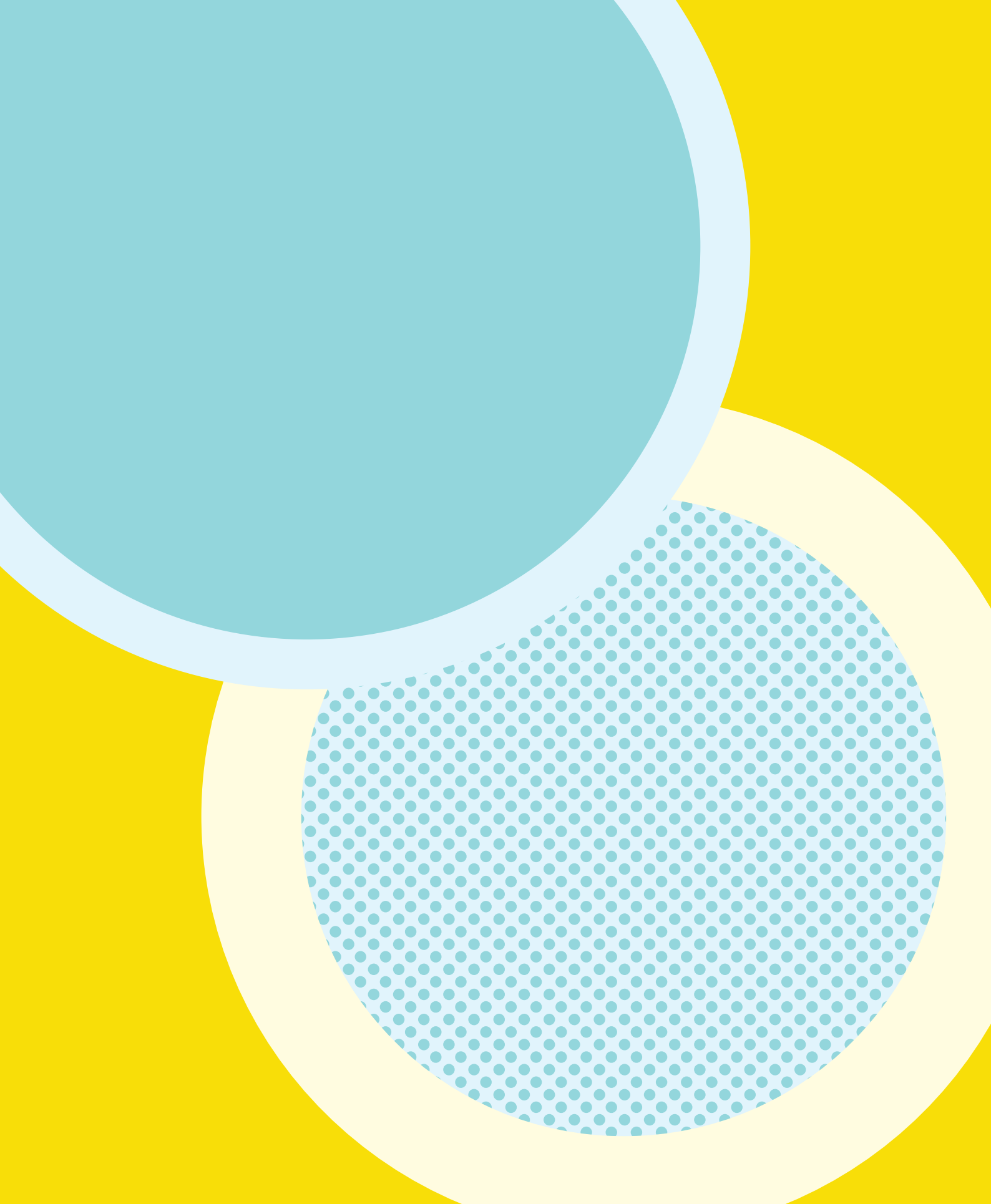
practising your own culture, religion and language



## Resource 4: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** is a list of children's rights. These rights are for every child up to 18 years old. All children should be able to experience these rights as they are growing up.





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