

# Enhancing Your Physical Environment

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# Physical Environment

When creating a safe and educational physical environment, keep the following criteria in mind.

# Physical Environment

- **The indoor and outdoor environments are safe, clean, attractive, and spacious**
- **Activity areas are defined clearly by spatial arrangement.**
- **Space is arranged so that children can work individually, together in small groups, or in a large group.**
- **Space is arranged to provide clear pathways for children to move from one area to another and to minimize distractions.**

# Physical Environment

- **The space for toddlers and preschool children is arranged to facilitate a variety of small group and/or individual activities, including block building, social, dramatic play, art, music, science, math, manipulative, and quiet book reading.**
- **Other activities such as sand/water play and woodworking also are available on occasion.**
- **Carpeted space as well as hard surfaces such as wood floors and ample crawling/toddling areas are provided for infants and non-walkers.**
- **Sturdy furniture is provided so non-walkers can pull themselves up or balance themselves while walking.**
- **School-age children are provided separate space arranged to facilitate a variety of age-appropriate activities and permit sustained work on projects.**

# Physical Environment

- **Age-appropriate materials and equipment of sufficient quantity, variety, and durability are readily accessible to children and arranged on low, open shelves to promote independent use by children.**
- **Materials are rotated and adapted to maintain children's interest.**
- **Individual spaces for children to hang their clothing and store their personal belongings are provided.**
- **Private areas are available indoors and outdoors for children to have solitude.**
- **The environment includes soft elements such as rugs, cushions, or rocking chairs.**

# Physical Environment

- **Sound-absorbing materials are used to cut down on excessive noise.**
- **The outdoor area includes a variety of surfaces, such as soil, sand, grass, hills, flat sections, and hard areas for wheel toys.**
- **The outdoor area includes shade; open space; digging space; and a variety of equipment for riding, climbing, balancing, and individual play.**
- **The outdoor area is protected by fences or natural barriers from access to streets or other dangers.**

# Block Center

- a complete set of unit blocks. You can choose wooden, cardboard, plastic, or foam blocks. Each set has pros and cons. Choose what is best for your group of children
- large and small vehicles;
- animals, people and traffic signs;
- recyclables such as cardboard boxes, paper towel tubes and oatmeal containers.
- Design plans that can be donated by a parent who is a architect or engineer.

# Dramatic Play Center

- dramatic play furniture (materials available depend on the current theme),
- dishes, utensils, place mats, pots, pans, food sets,
- telephones, computer keyboards, old typewriters,
- Dress up clothes, purses, wallets, shoes,
- menus, a cash register,
- paper, and pencils.



# Writing Center

- children's journals;
- pens, pencils,
- colored pencils,
- crayons, markers;
- various paper supplies,
- index cards;
- recycled magazines (that have been reviewed), menus, books, newspapers,
- clipboards and notebooks;
- magnetic letters; and examples of print, including sentence strips with the children's names on them, properly labeled items and alphabet strips.

# Creativity and Art Center

- painting supplies, pencils, crayons, markers and easels;
- recyclables such as wallpaper samples, fabric pieces and collage materials;
- glue and scissors;
- and various paper supplies.

# Reading and Listening Center

- children's literature (with the current theme-related literature),
- magazines, newspapers,
- song and poem charts;
- an audiocassette or CD player, headphones, stories recorded on tape and/or other tape-recorded songs;
- stories and poems;
- and soft elements such as rugs, pillows and beanbags.

# Math and Manipulative Center

- calendar, weather and number charts;
- magnetic numbers, puzzles, games and flash cards;
- safe manipulative for sorting (large buttons, stamps, stickers, etc.);
- paper, pencils, notebooks, index cards;
- measuring cups and spoons, cookie cutters in varying shapes and other materials used to weigh and measure.

# Science and Sensory Center

- sand and/or water table;
- Wonder Bottles (recycled water bottles with water and oil mixed together with small shells, rocks, sand, food coloring, etc.);
- magnets and magnetic items;
- feathers, leaves and other items from nature;
- magnifying glasses and mirrors.

# Circle Time Wall

- Morning Message - models handwriting
- How Are You Today? - real photographs of children that show five different emotions
- Weather Wear - dress magnetic photographs of children using a variety of weather appropriate items
- Daily Schedule - hands-on charting experience that describes what's planned for the day
- Kids of Character - features the character trait of the month