

GROW TO LEARN

EHS Environments and Materials

The **key concepts** to remember in creating room environments for infants and toddlers include:

1. Safety
2. Health
3. Comfort
4. Convenience
5. Child Sized
6. Flexibility
7. Movement
8. Choice
9. Culture

For all children, the environment should include:

- ❑ Comfortable temperature / well ventilated
- ❑ Natural and/or soft lighting
- ❑ Soothing colors - pleasing to look at rooms that are not too "busy"
- ❑ A place for everything - organized and clean
- ❑ A greeting/parent area
- ❑ Food preparation area with appropriate appliances
- ❑ Changing area where other children are within view
- ❑ Organized changing supplies and extra clothing within easy reach and near a sink
- ❑ Easy to clean carpeted areas
- ❑ Uncarpeted areas for eating, art/messy play
- ❑ Distinct interest areas divided by low dividers, shelves and risers
- ❑ Clear, open pathways for crawling and walking
- ❑ Cuddling places, soft nooks and crannies for quiet and individual play away from noisy areas
- ❑ Plants, fabrics
- ❑ Separate spaces for young infants and mobile infants so that young infants do not get injured
- ❑ Places to store each child's belongings
- ❑ All safety and health standards and procedures (see Health and Safety checklists)
- ❑ Convenient, adequate storage for extra materials
- ❑ Accessibility for children with special needs

Outdoors -

- ❑ Sunny and shaded areas
- ❑ Protective fencing
- ❑ A variety of surfaces and materials- hard, soft, grass, sand, water, etc.
- ❑ Adequate shock absorbing material under climbing equipment

For young infants, the environment should include:

- ❑ Comfortable places for holding infants, such as soft chairs, and/or hammocks
- ❑ Soft carpet and mats, grass for crawling and rolling over
- ❑ Sleeping area separate from play and eating areas

For mobile infants, the environment should include:

- ❑ Sleeping area separate from play and eating areas
- ❑ A separate bathroom with child sized toilets
- ❑ Sinks at the children's level with accessible paper towels
- ❑ Low, open shelves for toys with picture labels so children know where to find and return them
- ❑ Safe, soft spaces and ramps where babies can push, pull, ride, crawl and climb without being hurt if they fall
- ❑ Spaces for small group play
- ❑ Furnishings arranged so children can explore freely and not get hurt or into inappropriate/unsupervised places
- ❑ Toys and books are displayed in consistent places so children know where to find them

For toddlers, the environment should also include:

- ❑ A dramatic play area large enough for a number of different types of play to go on at the same time
- ❑ Children's art work posted just out of toddler's reach

For all children, materials should include:

- ❑ Appropriate changing tables with steps
- ❑ "Home like" touches - furniture, plants, curtains, pillows, fish tank, etc.
- ❑ Special toys and/or blankets from home
- ❑ Low, open, accessible, picture labeled shelves for toys
- ❑ Laminated pictures of the children and their families available at children's eye level including near the changing table
- ❑ Familiar household objects
- ❑ Pictures, posters, and materials reflecting the children's individual culture and ethnic characteristics
- ❑ Walls decorated with interesting pictures and textures that children can touch
- ❑ Steps or ladders for climbing
- ❑ Materials and toys that meet and slightly challenge the child's development
- ❑ Limited materials displayed and rotated to maintain interest
- ❑ Wall mounted (at the child's level) unbreakable mirror
- ❑ Books - thick cardboard, fabric or plastic with people representative of the children in the classroom and of a variety of different ethnicities, abilities and genders

- ❑ Music and story tapes, CDs, etc.
- ❑ Musical instruments
- ❑ Balls of various sizes and textures
- ❑ Opportunities for sensory experiences, toys with different textures, temperatures, etc.
- ❑ Safe materials and toys that are home made, that parents can make or use at home
- ❑ Any necessary adaptive equipment for children with special needs

For young infants, materials should include:

- ❑ Appropriate cribs personalized with blankets and sheets for each baby
- ❑ High chairs
- ❑ Mobiles where infants can see, hit and kick them
- ❑ Mirrors
- ❑ Cuddly toys - stuffed animals, puppets, and soft, washable dolls
- ❑ Books - soft fabric, plastic or cardboard with bright pictures of familiar objects

Responsive toys for grasping, shaking, kicking, hitting -

- ❑ Bells
- ❑ Busy boards
- ❑ Nesting bowls
- ❑ Small blocks
- ❑ Shape sorters
- ❑ Music boxes
- ❑ Squeeze toys that squeak
- ❑ Rattles
- ❑ Teethers
- ❑ Rubber dolls

For mobile infants, materials should include:

Appropriate, child sized furniture:

- ❑ Tables and chairs
- ❑ Risers
- ❑ Lofts
- ❑ Easels
- ❑ Slide
- ❑ Mattresses
- ❑ Rocking boat
- ❑ Large and small blocks (or home made cartons covered with contact paper)
- ❑ Small animals, people, and transportation toys
- ❑ Puppets
- ❑ Balls
- ❑ Paper, fabrics, ribbons, scarves, etc
- ❑ Push and pull toys
- ❑ Stacking, nesting, opening, turning, pop-up toys
- ❑ Multiples of toys and materials

- ❑ Playdough
- ❑ Trays or place mats to define individual work areas for messy play
- ❑ Scooters, push and pull toys and wagons (indoors and out)
- ❑ Large vinyl mats for stacking and climbing
- ❑ Crawl through structures - a tunnel or boxes with cutout doors and windows
- ❑ Individual teething toys
- ❑ Shape sorters
- ❑ Materials for fill and empty activities
- ❑ 3-4 piece puzzles - with knobs
- ❑ Soft toys

For toddlers, materials should also include:

- ❑ Individual mats for sleeping, with their own blankets, sheets and special "lovey"
- ❑ Puzzles and other take apart and fit together toys
- ❑ Construction materials with people, animals, cars and other accessories
- ❑ Water and sand tables - containers, scoops, etc.
- ❑ A wide variety of non toxic art materials
- ❑ Climbing ladders and ramps, slides
- ❑ Variety of riding toys - tricycles, cars, wagons, etc.
- ❑ Prop boxes for the dramatic play area that reflect experiences toddlers see at home or in the community
- ❑ Toddler sized toilets
- ❑ Simple games such as matching, lotto, feely bags

EHS Educator materials should include

- ❑ Parent education materials reflective of the learning style, language, education, and cultural differences of the families
- ❑ Community resources
- ❑ Supplemental books, toys, pictures, equipment, activities (primary choice for materials will be what the family has available in the home)

Resources, Read More About It...

Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers, Revised Edition Amy Laura Dombro, Laura J Colker, Diane Trister Dodge; Teaching Strategies, Inc.; 1999

Health and Safety Checklists - pg. 349

Chapter 7, Creating a Welcoming Environment

Chapter 16, Playing with Toys

Chapter 23, Going Outdoors

Children with special needs,

environmental adaptation, 113-15

outdoor environment, 310

toys, 230 - 32

Home made toys, 112, 230

Program for Infant Toddler Caregivers -

A Guide to Setting Up Environments

A Guide to Cognitive Development and Learning

The Anti-Bias Curriculum, Tools for Empowering Young Children; Louise Derman-Sparks; NAEYC, 2000

Integrating Anti-Bias Content Into the Daily Environment and Schedule, 25-27

Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Lally, Griffin, Fenichel, Segal, Stokes Szanton, Weissbourd,; Zero to Three, 1998

64-77

Child Development Services During Home Visits and Socializations in the Early Head Start Home-Based Option

Babies Can't Wait, Relationship Based Home Visiting; Linda Kamura; Babies Can't Wait Publishing, 2001

78-79

Landscapes for Learning, Designing Group Care Environments for Infants and Toddlers; Louis Torelli and Charles Durrett

Spaces for Children - Louis Torelli; Web site, www.spacesforchildren.net