

Child Care Center Design Checklist

Classrooms

- The children in your care will need appropriate environments to foster positive learning and social interaction. For this reason, classrooms that exceed the minimum footage required are highly recommended.
- Classrooms should have space for children to meet as a large group, work in small groups, and have time alone with adequate supervision.
- Child-size furniture and equipment are essential to the classroom. Chairs, tables, cabinets, and shelving should be the appropriate heights for children.
- Each learning center should have at least two areas for storing materials. Cabinets and open shelving units can be used to define the center areas.
- Learning center materials that children use each day should be easily accessible and kept in storage bins.
- If children eat meals in classrooms, consider tables large enough to accommodate 6-8 children instead of long cafeteria-type tables.
- Classrooms should be light with neutral walls.
- Natural light provides an inviting area and gives a nice atmosphere to classrooms.
- Some states require minimal lighting levels; check with licensing agencies regarding any regulations.
- Each classroom should have bathrooms available for children and

one conveniently located for adults.

- Fire regulations may require two exits; one is your entrance to the classroom, and the other may lead to the outdoor play area. Check with your local fire department for requirements.
- Patios adjacent to classrooms provide additional areas for messy water activities.

Materials & Equipment

- Selection of materials should be based on developmental practices of supporting the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth of children.
- Select and purchase similar furniture and materials for each classroom. This gives your center a refined look. Selection of furniture and equipment should be based on how often each will be used on a daily basis.
- Purchase the following for each child: cot, chair, table space, and cubbie for personal belongings.
- Select materials and equipment that are high quality because you will save on replacement and repair costs.
- Materials and equipment must be durable and safe.
- Materials should be open-ended and allow for a wide range of manipulative and creative uses.
- Look for furniture that is well-built and has easy-to-clean surfaces.

Storage

- Cots and rest mats require a large storage area.
- Each classroom should have an easily accessible closet or cabinet that can be closed, and is available on a daily basis. Storage areas should have adjustable shelving for flexibility as needed.
- There should be a main storage area for the entire center for large items, shared items, and bulk purchases such as art supplies and other materials.
- A locking closet should serve as a storage area for cleaning and maintenance supplies and equipment.
- Audio-visual equipment should have adequate storage. If the center has multiple classrooms, consider dedicating an area as the main storage area.

Learning Centers

- Each classroom should have learning centers. These centers provide children with appropriate, stimulating learning environments. Materials used in all learning centers should include items that reflect language, culture, and diversity in the broader world.

Art:

- Children will create a wide range of

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artwork: drawing, painting, coloring, clay sculptures, collages, and structures.

- The floor covering should make it easy to clean up any messes.
- The art area requires a table and chairs for a group of children to work comfortably.
- Storage cabinets are needed for containers of materials and tools children will use.
- Suggested Materials: paper in a variety of sizes and textures for drawing and coloring, construction paper, painting paper, collage materials, and clays.
- Suggested Tools: crayons, markers, colored pencils, paints, brushes, cups, aprons, clay tools, trays, storage containers, and work trays.
- The area should have a bulletin board to display children's work at their eye level.
- Children should have easy-to-clean work surfaces and height-appropriate chairs.
- The art area should have easels for painting and a place for drying artwork. This area should also have different clays and assorted surfaces.

Blocks:

- A large, carpeted area is ideal for construction and building activities because carpet helps keep the noise level down.
- Each classroom should have several complete sets of blocks. For a center with multiple classrooms, consider purchasing a wide variety of complete block sets that can be rotated. Hollow blocks add dimen-

sion and variety to construction.

- Props may include play figures, transportation toys, play animals, block-size doors, windows, and signs. Include containers and adequate space for appropriate storage.

Dramatic Play:

- Each classroom needs child-size house furniture that includes table and chairs, refrigerator, stove, sink, cupboard, doll beds, ironing board, high chairs, sofa, and rocking chair.
- Role play props include dolls and doll clothes and a variety of dress-up clothes, play food, dish sets, and pots and pans.
- This area should have an unbreakable mirror and storage for dress-up clothes.
- Puppets enhance the dramatic play area.
- Shelving and containers keep role play props organized.
- The carpeted area needs a child-size workbench. Include safety goggles and an apron for each child who works in this area. Include a basic play carpenter tool set for this area.

Discovery/Science Area:

- Include a variety of collections of things such as stones and seashells for children to look at, play with, and explore.
- Make scientific tools available such as magnets, scales and balances.
- Provide fish or other classroom pets in appropriate habitats.
- Arrange tables and chairs for children to look at and work with the collections or science tools.

Music and Movement Area:

- You will need a radio, CD, or MP3 player for this area. Include a high quality collection of age-appropriate music.
- Create a classroom collection of musical instruments so each child has an instrument to play.
- Collect instruments that reflect diversity of sound and culture. Include storage and shelving.

Manipulative Area:

- Include materials that allow children to classify objects, build structures, and solve problems, such as puzzles and table toys that fit together for building and designing.
- Include fine motor materials such as pegs and peg boards, beads, and other items to string and lace.
- This area should offer manipulatives to be used in creating designs.
- Provide tables and chairs for children to work at in the manipulative area. Consider using carpet for this area because children also like to work on the floor.
- This area will need storage containers for manipulatives and storage racks for puzzles. Include a shelving unit to hold racks and containers.

Literacy Area:

- Children will come to this area to read and look at books, create and listen to stories, and play with materials. Your book collection should include at least 3-5 books for each child in the classroom.
- A quality book collection should include picture books, storybooks, and poetry books that have a wide

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range of topics: families, humor, word and alphabet, cultural diversity, seasonal/holidays, fantasy, and true stories.

- Centers with several classrooms may consider creating a center library for all classrooms and families to use.
- Literacy areas need tables and chairs and comfortable places to sit and relax. Consider a carpeted area for some activities. Literacy areas also need a variety of age-appropriate literacy games and materials.
- Include materials for children to

create pictures and stories: paper in a variety of sizes, writing tools, and writing boards.

- Flannelboard stories are ideal for both individual and group use. Audio-visual equipment is essential to your literacy area.
- Place a bulletin board in the literacy area at a child's eye level and display photo picture collections, children's stories, and art work.

Water/Sand Play Area:

- Provide an appropriately sized water

and/or sand table. Flooring should be tile or messy mat.

- Include props for both water and sand activities.
- Shelving and storage areas will be needed for play materials. This area should include aprons for water play.

Indoor Large Motor Activities Area:

- Include climbing structures.
- Sturdy, movable play sets are essential to this area.
- Balls, hoops, and jump ropes are needed.

