



Resources for Child Caring

Raising the standard of care for children

What You'll See in the Classroom

Your child's preschool environment should offer a wide variety of materials to play with and explore

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For play to result in purposeful and [productive learning](#), the classroom environment must be structured to achieve this goal. A clear structure helps children feel secure and enables them to build [social and emotional skills](#) as they learn.

A preschool classroom should be divided into distinct interest areas so that children learn to make choices and initiate their own activities. Each interest area offers a different type of learning [experience](#), thus accommodating a variety of [learning styles](#). Children in a [well-organized environment](#) can:

- Trust and cooperate with others.
- Develop independence, make choices and clean up.
- Focus on what they're doing and stay involved in their work.
- Acquire skills and concepts as they select and use materials.

Some programs may call interest areas by different names. Others may not have all of these areas—generally, programs for younger preschoolers have fewer distinct areas, because younger children do better with fewer choices. And many of the activities we describe, such as cooking, music and movement can take place without a designated area.

Blocks: In this area you'll see large hardwood blocks, arranged by size and shape, with labels on the shelves to show children where each type belongs. Props such as cars, signs and train tracks inspire children to make towers, bridges, buildings and more.

House corner or dramatic play: An assortment of props and equipment invites children to try out different roles. Sometimes the area may be a home with a stove, refrigerator, sink, table, cradles and beds; other times, the area may be something else, such as a post office or grocery store, with appropriate props.



Art: In this area are easels, paints, markers, crayons, chalks, glue, scissors, play-dough, clay, and clean-up materials. Here children draw, cut, paste, mold and paint.

Table toys: Puzzles, games and small manipulative materials encourage children to sort, classify, make patterns, match and experiment with construction.

Sand and water: Here children sift sand and scoop water, build sand castles and blow bubbles, and explore why some objects sink and others float.

Library: This is the primary location for books, writing materials, and in some cases, tape recorders. Here children look through books, listen to recorded stories and music, and write or dictate their own stories and songs.

Music and movement: Musical instruments, tapes or CDs, and supplies for musical activities invite children to make and listen to music and explore different body movements during the day.

Cooking: Working independently or in small groups, children prepare food and eat it. They use bowls, cups, spoons, and other equipment and tools as necessary.

Computers: Some but not all preschools have computers. If the software is interactive and encourages preschoolers to experiment, this is a place they can make designs, solve problems and play games on their own or with others.

Indoor climbing, building and riding area: Some preschools are fortunate enough to have space for large equipment indoors, perhaps in a separate room. Such equipment may include a climbing apparatus, slides, a balance beam, large cars and trucks, tricycles, wagons and scooters.

Outdoors or playground: Open space and climbing and riding equipment encourages children to run, throw balls, enjoy the outdoors and socialize. In good weather, many indoor activities can take place outdoors as well.

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