

SETTING UP YOUR DAY CARE HOME

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YOU WILL LEARN:

- children learn from everything around them.
- the way you set up your child care home can make children act in different ways.
- a comfortable, pleasing, and safe space helps children play and learn better.
- you can make your home meet your family's needs and the children's needs.

SETTING UP YOUR HOME

The most important thing to remember is that your home should be safe and clean. Before any children come into your home, you must CHILD PROOF it.

- Put covers on all electrical outlets.
- Put poisons (such as bleach, ammonia, detergent, plant food, etc.) out of children's reach.
- Put breakable objects, sharp things, and house plants out of reach.
- Make sure the play area is clean. Vacuum rugs daily if you have infants and toddlers. Sweep often. (Infants and toddlers put everything in their mouths.)
- Set up activity areas in your home. Remember that it is still your home. Your family needs space for relaxing, studying, and entertaining friends.

PLANNING ACTIVITY AREAS

Activity areas for children should include:

- a place for messy play, like art or water activities.
- a place for loud, active play, like jumping, rolling, and dancing.
- a space for working or playing quietly.
- a place to pretend.
- a place to relax or be alone.
- a place to eat.

- a place to rest or sleep.

A PLACE FOR MESSY PLAY

You should have some of the following things:

- dish pans or wash tubs, paint brushes, paints, shaving cream, food coloring, magic markers, paper, towels, and kitchen utensils like rolling pins, measuring cups and spoons, and egg beaters.
- a sink nearby for washing up.
- sponges and wash cloths so the children can help clean.
- a low table with chairs or a regular table with cushions or children's seats on the chairs so children can use the table comfortably.
- towels to mop up water on the floor.
- old sheets or drop cloths (or newspapers) to put under messy activities and keep children from slipping.

Children enjoy messy play more if they sit in chairs or on the floor. Messy play is safest and easiest to clean up in the kitchen, or it can be done outside in good weather.

A PLACE FOR LOUD, ACTIVE PLAY

You should have some of the following things:

- mattress, pillows, or cushions for jumping.
- blankets for hiding and rolling in.
- scarves for running and dancing with.
- ropes for jump rope.
- boards for making balance beams and ramps.
- refrigerator or other appliance cardboard box for crawling into.
- a radio or stereo for music to dance to.
- a big, open space to move in.

Keep loud, active play away from your quiet area.

Children need to move a lot. Change the way you set up your activity space a little every day to keep it interesting to the children.

If you have enough room, a living room or den would be a good place for active play. It should be away from your quiet space but where you can watch and supervise the children.

A PLACE FOR QUIET PLAY

You should have some of the following things:

- beads, buttons, spools,
- puzzles, pegs,
- blocks, stacking toys, etc.
- a rug or table with chairs for sitting.

The quiet work space can be a corner in the kitchen, so you can watch children while you make a snack. Put toys on a low shelf or in boxes on the floor, so children can find toys easily. Put toys in buckets, baskets, or boxes. If you put the toys in the same place each day, the children can remember where to find them. Put the same type of toy in the same box each day. For example, put all the beads in one box and all the blocks in another. Be sure to keep toys with small pieces away from infants and toddlers. Keep this area away from noisy play.

A PLACE FOR PRETENDING

You should have some of the following things:

- large cardboard boxes for making pretend cars, stoves, desks, etc.
- toy telephones.
- baskets, dolls, hats, and old clothes for dress up.
- old pots and pans.
- a blanket to put over a table to make a house, cave, bus, tent, etc.

This space should be away from noisy areas. It could be in a corner or behind a couch.

A PLACE TO RELAX OR BE ALONE

You should have some of the following things.

- soft pillows or a mattress in a corner.
- soft pillows in a big, cardboard appliance box.
- a blanket or colorful sheet to put over a table to make a tent.

Use this space as your book area. Keep your books on a shelf close to the floor or in a basket so children can see them. They should be in a place children can reach.

If you have infants and toddlers, have lots of soft places for sitting, resting, looking at books, or cuddling. Use bright fabrics. Have a rocking chair to rock young children to sleep. Let older children sit in it and read.

A PLACE TO EAT

You should have some of the following things:

- child-size tables (or regular tables and chairs with boosters).
- a drop cloth or plastic tablecloth under the table to keep the floor clean.

- high chairs for infants and toddlers.
- a washcloth and toothbrush for each child, with his or her name on them.

A PLACE TO SLEEP

You should have a quiet place for each child to sleep. The child should sleep in the same place each day. Buy sleep mats or cots if you do not have enough beds. Play quiet music so children do not hear noise from outside.

RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

Planning Environments for Young Children by Sybil Kritchevsky and Elizabeth Prescott, available from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20009 (1-800-424-2460).

"When You Think About Spaces" and "Worlds for Infants and Toddlers," *Beginnings Magazine*, Summer, 1984.

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