

Makeover Minutes

Quick tips for your learning environment



Infants and Toddlers

Infants and toddlers are defined as children from birth to age two-and-a-half. Designing an environment for this age group requires unique attention to the rapidly changing needs of the youngest learners. Infant and toddler development is ideally supported by plentiful and accessible materials, responsive caregiver(s), and a safe environment to explore.



Watch Video:
[Infants and Toddlers](#)

Environmental Tips

Supportive interactions

Positive relationships with primary caregivers set the stage for infant and toddler development. Some examples of supportive interactions are:

- Adding language to the actions you take with children throughout the day.
- Responding with interest to what children say or do.
- Providing opportunities for physical warmth.
- Interacting with children as they play, eat, and learn new skills.

Accessible and age-appropriate materials

When materials and spaces are accessible, young children can access them on their own, or with some help from caregivers.

Accessibility promotes skill development, independence, and a variety of learning experiences for young children. Examples of accessibility include:

- Providing baskets to store materials that can be brought to non-mobile infants.
- Storing simple and safe materials for toddlers on low open shelves that they can reach and use independently.
- Using low adult seating to make yourself more physically accessible to children.

- Limiting the use of restrictive devices such as swings and bouncers, or not using them at all.

Safety and supervision

Infant and toddler spaces should be arranged to minimize potential hazards relating to safety and supervision. Pay special attention to hard-to-supervise areas such as diapering tables, corners, and shelving. Plan ahead to minimize lapses in supervision by coordinating with another adult, or rearrange areas of low visibility.

All materials that are freely accessible to infants and toddlers must be safe. Consider adapting materials and activities to allow infants and toddlers safe participation. For example:

- Use thick crayons instead of thin ones.
- Keep marker caps out of reach, or use a wood marker holder and secure caps with glue.
- Items such as cotton balls, sand, water play, glitter, and anything that presents a choking hazard should not be used with infants and should only be used with toddlers under close supervision.
- Keep a choking hazard tool handy and use it to double check toys for safety.



This bead fits entirely inside the tube, indicating a choking hazard.

Produced by
Cultivate Learning



Funded by
Washington State Department of
Children, Youth, and Families





BEFORE: Cribs are placed end-to-end, which does not provide adequate spacing to reduce the spread of germs.



AFTER: Cribs are separated by at least three feet of space, and a cozy area was added for children who are awake.



BEFORE: All materials are used in one open space. No separation of space for infants and toddlers is present.



AFTER: A low barrier was used to create a safe space for infants and toddlers to play, while allowing for peer interaction and easy supervision.

Additional Resources

Visit the [Meaningful Makeover](#) website for full episodes and more great tips!

References

Harms, T., Cryer, D., Clifford, R. M., & Yazejian, N. (2019). Family child care environment rating scale, third edition (FCCERS-3). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Produced by
Cultivate Learning



Funded by
Washington State Department of
Children, Youth, and Families

