

Learning Centers

Set up learning centers in your classroom for activities you use often, or gather supplies and place them in plastic storage bins—one bin for each kind of activity. Then simply pull out the bins you need for the activities you have chosen to do with the children. Here are suggestions for basic supplies.



Art: crayons, washable markers, assorted paper, blunt-tip scissors, tape, paintbrushes, watercolor paints, paint shirts, glue sticks, modeling dough



Craft: specific items will be suggested for weekly projects



Music: rhythm instruments, CD player, CDs



Family Living: child-size furniture, broom, dustcloths, toy food, toy dishes, dress-up clothes



Game: foam balls, beanbags



Wonder: nature items, magnifying glasses, sand pan



Active Play: specific items may be suggested for group activities and dramatic play



Blocks & Buildings: blocks, toy cars, town play mat, play barn and toy animals



Books: Bible story picture books and picture books



Puzzles: children's puzzles



Food: paper plates and cups, plastic spoons, napkins, paper towels, moist towelettes or wet wipes

- Young children learn best by doing and by using all five senses. Provide plenty of time for exploring, and don't be quick to do things for them.
- Use this rule: If activity ingredients are wet, use them on a table. If they are dry, place them on the floor.
- Avoid clogged glue bottles. Cut an egg carton apart, leaving two cups together. Barely cover the bottom of one cup with glue and place two cotton swabs in the other. Place one pair of cups between every two children. No cleanup is needed; just throw away.
- For water play, cover tables with bath towels. Use items to pour, funnel, mix, and pump. (Make a pump by cutting the bottom from a hand-pump soap bottle.)
- Make waterproof aprons from oilcloth tablecloths, using bias tape or ribbon ties. Have adult-size, button-down, short-sleeved shirts available when painting. Children can put on the shirts backward, and you can button a top button. The teacher should wear an apron or shirt around water and paint too.

Learning Centers

- Set up portable hand-washing areas. Cut a shower curtain into pieces to use under dishpans. Add motel soap, little sponges, old hand towels, and use just an inch or two of water.
- Place a shower curtain or oilcloth on the floor under sand, soil, rice, beans, corn, or cornmeal. Lift sides and funnel the contents into a container when finished. Play with these dry ingredients with scoops, berry baskets, funnels, and measuring cups. Store everything in a plastic storage bin with a lid.
- Activities should grow with the child. For instance, let a child begin pounding with a wooden peg bench, then try pounding golf tees with a wooden hammer into a sheet of foam. Advance to a real hammer and nails to actually build something.
- Place nature items on cotton in greeting card boxes or other small flat storage containers. Tape or glue in items that are especially fragile. This allows children to observe without damaging.
- Fill empty food boxes (gelatin, cereal, macaroni and cheese) with paper and cover with clear adhesive covering. This makes them sturdy and permanent for home-living grocery play.
- Use classroom bulletin boards as learning centers. Children will be more attracted to them if they participate in putting them together or can manipulate them in some way.