

Setting up your environment

Creating an effective classroom environment means thoughtfully arranging spaces, materials, and routines to promote children's safety, independence, learning, and sense of belonging. This resource highlights key classroom setup considerations and ECERS-3 expectations.



Things to consider:

Safety

- Ensuring well-being of students
- Secure and stable furniture
- Outlets are covered
- Sanitizer and wipes out of reach (even if they climb)
- Appropriate supervision in all areas

Spacing

- Creating zones to encourage and accommodate appropriate activity
- Ample space for number of children allowed in center
- Clearly defined interest areas
- Consider flow of traffic
- Designated space for whole group/small group

Set Up

- Materials should invite play, pique curiosity, and enhance curriculum
- Not too many that it's overwhelming
- Accessible
- Organized/labeled
- Display materials are relevant to children

Culture

- Consider the perspectives of students and staff in the classroom.
Can they see themselves and others?
 - Books, food, dress up, display
 - Ages, stages, and abilities

ECERS-3 Requirements

1. Indoor space: The space used for children throughout most of the day
 - a. Good ventilation and natural light
 - b. Adequate sound absorbing material (rugs/soft material)
 - c. Ample space for varied activities
 - How many children are allowed in the space?
2. Furnishings for care, play and learning:
 - a. Furniture for daily activities: Tables, chairs, soft furnishings, three or more pieces designed for a specific activity
 - b. Sufficient and child sized: Elbows on table with feet on floor for 75% of children
 - c. Storage and cubbies: Can accommodate personal belongings without overflowing throughout the whole year (think snow gear)
 - d. Cozy area:
 - Softness for the child's whole body
 - Away from traffic or loud interest areas
 - Accessible for one hour
3. Room arrangement for play and learning:
 - a. Variety of play areas
 - b. Five interest centers
 - Only materials and furniture for a specific type of play
 - Appropriate amount of space
 - c. Easy to supervise
 - d. Active and quiet areas are separated:
 - Quiet: Books, writing, listening, cozy area
 - Buffer: Fine motor, art, nature/science, math, sand/water (near sink)
 - Active: Dramatic play, blocks, music
4. Space for privacy: A place where children can relax, regulate, or feel protected from other children to play alone or with another friend.
 - a. Easily supervised
 - b. Limited number of students allowed
 - c. Away from a louder area or a busy pathway
 - d. Accessible for one hour
5. Child related display: Includes all display in the classroom (staff, child's, commercial). Should include:
 - a. Individualized and child-created
 - b. Photographs of children
 - c. Related to current theme
 - d. At children's eye level
 - e. Discussed with children and used as a teaching tool

6. Space for gross motor
 - a. In good repair
 - b. Outdoor and indoor
 - c. Two types of surfaces
 - d. Separate various activities if space allows
7. Gross motor equipment:
 - a. Accessible for 30 minutes
 - b. Anchored or portable: at least seven different skills (climbing, sliding, etc.)
 - c. Helmets for bikes and ride-on toys
 - d. Challenging equipment offered (standing scooters, light weights balls/bats, rope ladder)

Questions to consider:

- Are all the materials in your classroom used for teaching?
- Which area/center needs the most redirection?
- Can the set up be switched to improve productivity?

