

MATERIALS - What & How

Another aspect of the learning environment are the materials available to children each day. Too often, we get busy and just have the same materials available all the time. Changing up the materials is very important for keeping the children engaged and promoting learning across multiple developmental areas. Gee Whiz is adding a component to our monthly program called, "Add & Enhance." This is a list of materials for the different center areas (including outside) that you can add to reinforce out monthly units. Our goal is to help you "mix things up" to enhance the learning environment even more! That said, here are some very basic ideas of materials you should have on hand in each of the most common learning areas. If you are on a limited budget (and who isn't?), thrift stores and/or yard sales can be great resources for toys and materials IF they are in good shape and can be washed/cleaned. Many of these materials can be stored in large plastic tubs to make bringing them out and putting them away easier for you.



ART

- Paint (all colors)
- Paintbrushes (different sizes for children with different levels of fine motor control)
- Construction paper
- Felt & craft foam
- Colored art tissue
- Coffee filters
- Paper plates (small and large)
- Crayons/markers (washable) - Again, provide both thin and thick markers/crayons.
- Child-safe scissors (loop scissors for children with limited fine motor control)
- Old newspapers/magazines/catalogs
- Watercolors
- Stickers
- Washable stamp pads & stamps

DRAMATIC PLAY/DRESS-UP

- Clothing - men's, women's, children's - be sure to reflective of different cultures
- Plastic play food (including ethnic foods)
- Empty food cartons stuffed with paper and taped shut
- Toy dishes, silverware, cooking pots/pans
- Play kitchen
- Child-sized cleaning tools (e.g., mop, broom, dustpan, vacuum)
- Dolls & plush animals
- Doll bed and high chair (if possible)
- Plastic hats (must be washable)
- Dress-up clothing for different careers + props associated with each
- Index cards, notepads, crayons/markers
- Toy cash register
- Paper shopping bags (or fabric shopping bags)
- Cardboard boxes - They can become ANYTHING!

MATERIALS - What & How (Con't)

BLOCKS

- Table blocks - assorted types based on the developmental levels of the children (e.g., Duplos®, bristle blocks, magnet blocks, etc.)
- Floor blocks (larger, wooden blocks and/or cardboard blocks)
- Toy vehicles (cars, trucks, buses, trains)
- People figures (all ages, male/female, different ethnicities)
- Cardboard boxes (all shapes & sizes)

MANIPULATIVES, MATH & SCIENCE

- Empty cardboard boxes with flaps taped shut (for building)
- Puzzles (wooden and jigsaw)
- Stringing beads - Just make sure they are safe for children under 3.
- Lacing cards
- Busy boxes
- Playsets
- Unbreakable magnifiers & child-safe binoculars
- Pegboards
- Calculators with large buttons
- Toy cash register with play paper money
- Counters (safe for children under 3)



LITERACY & WRITING

- Books, books, books! - Board books and paperbacks including poetry, nonfiction and fiction
- Notebooks
- Index cards
- White paper (lined and unlined)
- Writing tools (e.g., pencils, washable markers, crayons)
- Children's magazines
- Cookbooks (can go in DRAMATIC PLAY as well)
- Magnetic or foam letters

GROSS MOTOR PLAY & MUSIC/MOVEMENT (for indoors or out)

- Large blankets or bed sheets
- Pillows
- Parachute (if available)
- Balls (assorted types and sizes)
- Orange cones
- Hula hoops
- Riding toys (with and without pedals)
- Tricycles
- 4-wheeled scooters
- Large plastic trucks
- Climbing apparatus
- Bubble solution & wands
- Beach balls
- Sand box (if outdoors) including buckets, shovels, rakes, etc.
- Toy leaf rakes
- CD player and CD's OR digital music device the children can use
- Rhythm band instruments