

# COACH'S CORNER

*Coach's Corner is a DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.*



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## Room Arrangement

Room arrangement is always a hot topic in the field of early childhood education. It is so important, in fact, that room arrangement is sometimes referred to as a “third teacher” if organized effectively. When a space is designed intentionally for early learners, it has the potential to encourage independence, cooperative play, and social interactions, along with supporting positive behaviors. The environment should also be predictable and flow with the routines of the day.

### Things to keep in mind when working on your overall room arrangement:

- **Size of the space-** any size room can be arranged effectively.
  - For smaller spaces, consider rotating materials. Store materials that are not currently in use in a closet or on a high shelf.
  - For larger spaces, consider the flow of the room. Limit areas that will tempt children to run. This can be achieved by spacing out furniture and shelving.
- **Supervision-** Keep in mind that children must be in view at all times; ensure that furniture and shelving do not block your view of the room.
  - Ask yourself, “If I am working individually with one child, can I quickly scan the room and see the rest of the group from any area?”
  - If you are the only educator in the space, ensure your back isn’t turned to the children during diaper changes.
- **Accessibility-** Make sure frequently used materials and supplies are readily available. Searching for supplies/materials can lead to longer transition times and frustration for both adults and children.
- **Spaces for privacy-** Be sure to have an area where 1 or 2 children can play quietly.
- **Separate quieter areas from louder areas-** For example, the block area would be best suited away from a cozy corner or reading area.



*A thoughtfully-placed low shelf creates a protected area for building, but still allows for visibility.*

## Centers or interest areas

Another important piece of the room arrangement puzzle is the set-up of interest areas. Separating toys and materials into interest areas helps children have a better understanding of where materials belong. It also designates specific areas to play with certain materials. Even the smallest spaces can be set up to be engaging!

- **Art materials** are best stored near a table or easel. For toddlers, it may work best to have a small variety of materials out and accessible. Educators can bring out additional materials for specific projects. If your program has a mixed-age group, be sure to store any materials that could be a choking hazard away from children under the age of three.
- Be sure to have a **“cozy corner”** in your room that is comfortable and inviting. This area can also be paired with books. This is a great space for one-on-one time with the children.
- The **dramatic play area** typically houses play food, dishes, dolls, and dress-ups. Consider rotating in different themes such as a doctor’s office, restaurant, post office, school, etc. For smaller spaces, create “prop boxes” for each theme and store them away when they are not in rotation.



*Add a few straw hats, toy binoculars and stuffed or plastic animals to your pretend play area for an instant safari! Tuck the items away in a prop box when you’re ready to try out another theme.*

- Keep in mind that not all types of materials need completely separate areas. For example, many programs combine **math and science materials** on one shelf.
- **Fine motor materials** could have their own dedicated space or could be stored in various interest areas. For example, a shape puzzle could be stored in the math area. Magnatiles could be stored in the science area since they are magnetic, or in the block area with other building materials.
- Be sure your **block area** has a sturdy surface for building. Locate the block area away from high-traffic areas so that children can build without having their structures knocked over.

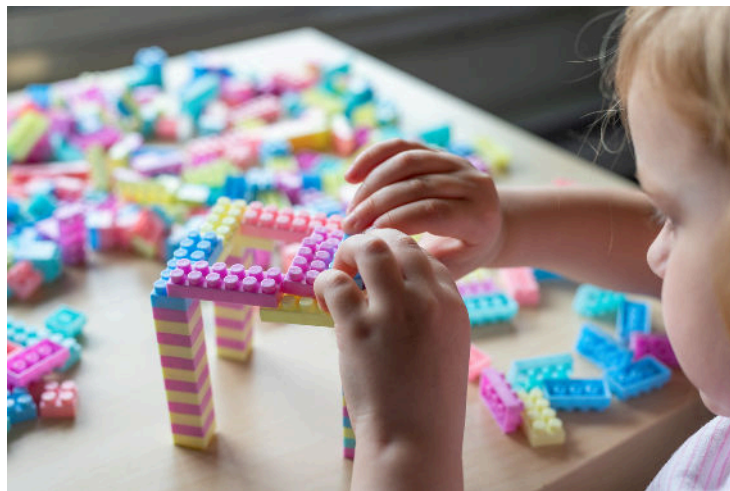


***Trace the outline of wooden block shapes on construction paper. Cut out the shapes and secure them to the shelf with clear contact paper. This will provide children with a visual of where each type of block should be stored!***

## Multi-age environments

For family child care and other multi-age programs, it can be challenging to keep materials for each age group accessible. Use these tips for organizing materials:

- Consider the ages of the children when organizing shelves.
  - Place materials for younger toddlers on lower shelves and preschool materials on high shelves.
  - Be sure that choking or strangulation hazards are out of reach of infants and toddlers.
- Get a rolling cart to store materials that are of interest to school-age children. This cart can be rolled into the space when the school-age children are present and then stored away when it is not needed.
- Provide a special area or a table for preschool children to play with materials that have smaller parts.



As an educator, you know your space and children best! We would love to see the creative ways that programs have chosen to set up their spaces! Feel free to send us pictures or tag us on social media!

## Resources:

[The Indoor Environment: Designing and Organizing- The Virtual Lab School](#)  
[Classroom Design and How it Influences Behavior- Community Playthings](#)