

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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Introducing New Activities and Materials

One of the most exciting things in an early childhood education program is introducing new materials or activities. New materials can help to refresh the space for both children and educators, sparking creativity and serving as inspiration for new activities and imaginative play.

If your program is planning to order materials, first take inventory of what your program currently has available to children.



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- **What is a crowd favorite?**
- **What is missing?**
- **What needs to be replaced or replenished?**
- **What skills are you looking to promote?**
- **What are the children currently interested in?**

These questions will help you determine the best purchases for your program!

New materials are exciting, but we want to be sure that we are intentional about how we introduce them to children. Here are some strategies for introducing new materials and activities to children in ways that are not overwhelming or chaotic.

Introducing New Materials

Class/space expectations-

This is a great opportunity to review expectations around how children handle shared items. **Discuss what it means to treat our materials with respect and explain where the items will be stored** when they are not being used.



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Staggered introductions

- Instead of putting all of the new materials out at once, **try adding just a few things at a time**. This will make it less overwhelming.
- Another idea is to **give a preview of the new items during whole group time** and let the children know that these items will be available during free play.

Modeling

This may sound silly but you can demonstrate how to use the new materials! Sometimes as adults, we assume that children automatically know how to play with all toys. That is not always the case! Especially today when many toys are electronic and do the “play” for them.

- **When introducing more open-ended materials, demonstrate a few ways to use them**. This is especially important for our infants and younger toddlers.

Scaffolding

For our younger toddlers, **educators can invite a child to explore the new materials one-on-one**. This allows the educator to observe how the child interacts with the items and scaffold to help them grow in their play.



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As always, there are some things to keep in mind:

- New toys are exciting to young children, which can lead to difficulties with sharing and turn-taking.
 - Educators may need to be **extra hands-on, ensuring that all children have a turn** with new items.
 - **Another idea is to purchase multiples of the more popular items**. This will help to minimize conflict.

- Consider **rotating the materials in your space**. This helps to keep things fresh! There is no set way to do it; just find a system that works for your program.
 - Keep the extra items in a closet, storage space, or even in bins on out-of-reach shelving.
 - Educators can choose to rotate monthly/quarterly or to add things based on children's interests and curriculum themes. Just ensure the **active selection still offers a variety of materials to match different skill levels and interests**.
 - Rotating materials also helps to **cut down on clutter**, especially if your space is small.

Resources

- [Rocking and Rolling. Using Materials Creatively to Enhance Toddler Learning Environments- NAEYC](#)
- [Ready, Set, Explore! Introducing Classroom Materials with Intention- Beckers](#)
- [Materials to Support Learning \(Video\)- Head Start](#)