

# Infant & Toddler Environment Planning

Spaces for Infants and Toddlers	Your Plan for Improvement of the Social Emotional Environment
<p><b>An environment that is</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe and free from hazards</li> <li>• Clean</li> <li>• Has natural light from windows and other soft lighting</li> <li>• Aesthetically pleasing</li> <li>• Uncluttered</li> <li>• Individually, age, and culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Inviting and interesting to children</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Special places for nurturing children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A comfortable space, away from active play for staff to sit on the floor (with back support) and hold a child or children</li> <li>• A loft</li> <li>• An adult-sized couch</li> <li>• A mat on the floor against the wall with pillows with washable covers</li> <li>• A rocking chair/glider</li> </ul>	
<p><b>A quiet space for infants and toddlers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A soft space away from active play</li> <li>• A soft space for two children with family photographs books, dolls and blanket, soft toys, quiet toys, puppets, and books</li> <li>• A nest (or create a nest with an inner tube) with a blanket over it</li> <li>• A space with boxes large enough for a child or two to crawl in and out of</li> </ul>	
<p><b>A space for infants and toddlers to use creative arts materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A space for coloring or painting on paper on the floor (preferably near a short sink not used for food preparation)</li> <li>• Short tables for clay, play dough, thick crayons, nontoxic paints, or finger paints</li> <li>• Paper and other interesting materials to manipulate and create</li> <li>• Large pieces of paper and other interesting materials to draw and paint on</li> <li>• Short easels and brushes for toddlers to use by themselves or with other children</li> <li>• A low shelf with safe creative materials attractively displayed and available for children to use</li> <li>• A place to display children's creative work</li> </ul>	



<p><b>Spaces for delighting the senses of infants and toddlers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short shelves and tables for toddlers with sensory materials displayed in an inviting way</li> <li>• Small individual tubs or other containers, or water tables with water (always monitor children very carefully with water; children have drowned in an inch of water in a container)</li> <li>• Containers or tables for sand and other natural materials</li> <li>• Interesting materials such as funnels, plastic animals, cups, scales, etc. on the sensory tables or in containers</li> <li>• A light table</li> <li>• Wading pools filled with different textured balls and other safe materials</li> <li>• A space to use feeling and sound boxes</li> <li>• A space for making bubbles with various sizes of wands</li> </ul>	
<p><b>A space for peek-a-boo and social games</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A space made with a cloth hanging from the ceiling with a mirror on the wall</li> <li>• Boxes of various sizes with holes cut out of the sides. Add cloth over the holes for variation and “peek-a-boo” games</li> <li>• Lofts with a plexiglass panel in the floor so children that are up can look down and children that are down can look up and enjoy each other</li> </ul>	
<p><b>A space for the development of large motor skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Floor space so that children can move freely and be active with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Couches to walk around (while using the couch for support) and climb up on for seeing the world</li> <li>• Ramps and short climbers to climb</li> <li>• Tunnels to crawl through</li> <li>• Mats at different levels for climbing</li> <li>• Balls of all sizes</li> <li>• Push toys like toy shopping carts, baby strollers, and riding toys</li> <li>• A bar fastened to the wall on various levels so that children can pull to stand</li> <li>• Large empty appliance boxes with windows cut out and/or the end cut off so that children can crawl through the box</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><b>A space for toys and manipulative items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short shelves with toys/materials--carefully arranged so that children can reach them</li> <li>• Toys that move, make noise, and change shape</li> <li>• Safe nesting blocks, ring towers, large beads, “cause and effect” toys, “take apart” toys, shape sorters, stacking toys, large pegs and peg boards, large beads for stringing, puzzles, and other interesting materials</li> <li>• Puppets, dolls</li> <li>• Toy telephones</li> <li>• Tubes of varying lengths and sizes</li> </ul>	



<b>A space for toys and manipulative items (continued)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A child-sized table and chairs</li> <li>• Spaces to play on the floor by themselves, with staff and with peers</li> </ul>	
<b>A space for toddlers to build and construct</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A platform or hard surface for building</li> <li>• Blocks of all sizes, shapes and textures</li> <li>• Wooden animals, little houses, play people, trucks and cars</li> </ul>	
<b>A space for dramatic play and pretend</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A corner or some small area</li> <li>• A mirror, low pegs to hang clothing, scarves, purses, hats, easy-to-put-on dress up clothes</li> <li>• Safe kitchen utensils, pots and pans, child size dishes, containers of various sizes, pretend multi-ethnic food, and/or clean empty commercial food boxes</li> <li>• Multiethnic dolls, doll blankets, baby bottles and bed, doll clothes</li> <li>• Puppets of varying sizes and shapes</li> <li>• Child-sized tables, stoves, refrigerators</li> </ul>	
<b>A space for reading to children and places for infants and toddlers to reach books and look at them in comfort</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A special place that is designed for infants and toddlers to choose books from an attractive, easily reached display and “read” or be read to in comfort</li> <li>• An adult-sized couch for adults to read to children</li> <li>• A child-sized couch or chair for children to “read” books</li> <li>• Also place books around the room as any space is a great space for reading to a child or a child looking at books</li> </ul>	
<b>Feeding and eating spaces for infants and toddlers</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area convenient to an adult sink and refrigerator</li> <li>• Comfortable floor chairs for adults to feed infants on their laps or sitting in infant seats</li> <li>• Rocking chairs/gliders for feeding bottles to infants and holding children of all ages</li> <li>• Child-sized chairs and tables for toddlers to sit and feed themselves</li> <li>• A sink at children’s level for toddlers</li> </ul>	
<b>Sleeping, diapering, or toileting spaces</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area away from active play for sleeping</li> <li>• Cribs</li> <li>• Cots for toddlers</li> <li>• A rocker/glider for adults to help children transition from wake</li> </ul>	



<p><b>Sleeping, diapering or toileting spaces (continued)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An area near an adult size sink for diapering (not used for preparing food)</li> <li>• Diaper table with storage space</li> <li>• Sturdy stairs with sides for toddlers to climb to the diaper table</li> <li>• A private or semi-private area for toileting</li> <li>• Child-sized toilets for toddlers who are learning to use the toilet (check your state’s licensing standards)</li> <li>• A child-size sink</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Outdoor space</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaces for walking, running, jumping</li> <li>• Large stable equipment such as climbers and slides that are inviting for peer interactions</li> <li>• Areas of sun and shade</li> <li>• Spaces for toddlers to use riding toys</li> <li>• Materials for carrying, building, manipulating, and creating</li> <li>• Spaces for adults to nurture children</li> <li>• Spaces for children to sit and rest alone or together</li> </ul>	

*Adapted with permission from:*

Wittmer, D.S. & Petersen, S.H. (2017). *Infant and toddler development and responsive program planning: A relationship-based approach, 4th edition*. Pearson.

