

Classroom Setup

Your classroom environment reflects many things about your teaching. An environment where children can easily locate items, know what comes next in the day, and understand why they are participating in various activities provides structure and builds security. A cheerful, well-organized classroom helps you to teach effectively and allows the children in your classroom to easily access toys and materials that will help them grow and learn.

Introducing Materials

Introduce new materials slowly. Unveil them with excitement and plenty of opportunities for exploration. For example, when introducing Flip Crayons:

1. Show the Flip Crayons to children in the area where they will be stored. With excitement, encourage discussion about what the materials are ("I know these are special crayons!") and how they can be used (e.g., drawing Mat Man or writing your name).

2. Model proper use and care ("I'm using one Flip Crayon at a time so my friends can use them, too."). Have children take turns holding the Flip Crayons, drawing or writing. Then, model putting them away. Establish a signal, such as a song (such as "Clean Up is Fun" by The Learning Station) or call and response, to indicate to children it is time to clean up.

3. Facilitate activities with new materials while children practice using them independently, reinforcing proper use and care of materials as needed.

Organizing Materials

Organization of materials in the classroom should reflect whether they are shared or individual. Individual materials should be stored in a personal space, such as a cubby clearly labeled with the child's name. Organize shared classroom materials by dedicating a shelf to each of the learning areas you cover in a day. Clearly label each shelf as well as the shared materials it houses. Following are recommendations for organizing each shelf:

Language & Literacy (pp. 12-13)

- Stack the children's copies of *My Book* on the shelf.
- Assemble the Sound Around Box and keep the Magnetic Wood Pieces inside the box, placing

the box of Magnetic Picture Tiles and Color Tiles beside it.

- Place the Line It Up Bar on a magnetic surface in the classroom. Stack the Line It Up Story Cards and Coloring and Letter Cards on the shelf
- Place the A-B-C Touch & Flip Cards on the shelf
- Put the *Mat Man Book Set* and other favorite classroom books on the shelf for children to access

Readiness & Writing (p. 17-19)

- Stack the children's copies of *My First School Book* and *My First Lowercase Book* on the shelf
- Keep Flip Crayons in the plastic tub and Pencils for Little Hands in their box and place next to the activity books
- Put the Wood Pieces Set for Capital Letters in a large plastic bin that can be moved and opened easily, stacking the Mats for Wood Pieces next to this bin on the shelf
- Stack Roll-A-Dough Letters and Stamp and See Screens on the shelf
- Place Slate Chalkboards in a plastic bin; put the little sponges, chalk bits, and paper towel pieces in separate small containers or plastic bags, placing these in the plastic bin with the Slates for easy access for Wet-Dry-Try Activities
- Place the Magnetic Lowercase & Blackboard Sets on a shelf, using the chalk/sponges and paper towels from the Slate plastic container as needed

Numbers & Math (pp. 22-23)

- Stack children's copies of *I Know My Numbers* on the shelf
- Keep 4 Squares More Squares in its original box, or you can place pieces in a large plastic container
- Keep Tag Bags in its original box or you can place pieces in a large plastic container
- Put bag of Mix & Make Shapes on shelf



Classroom Management Tips

Oral Language:

- Take Squawker out of the box and place next to the Word Time Word Cards on a shelf

Science & Social Studies

- Label one large or two medium size containers for Science & Social Studies materials and place on the shelf

General

Begin by allowing 10–15 minutes for each learning area, working up to 20 minutes by the end of the year. Determine which learning area to begin with and when to teach each one during your day. Create a routine to make it predictable for you and your children.

Divide & Conquer

Several activities may begin at the carpet as whole group, especially when the multisensory introduction is music, but most learning will occur in small group, teacher-led centers. Establish free-play centers for children to play with puzzles, color, or build with blocks while you teach small groups at the teacher-led center.

Teaching Tables

Choose a specific table where you provide the teacher-led center and remain consistent, so children become familiar with it. There may be another table like this if you have a teacher's aide in the classroom. Keep the other tables as the child-led centers.

Care for Materials

It is important to explicitly teach about the care and organization of materials. Be sure to provide demonstration and reminders of appropriate use of materials and model for children then give appropriate amounts of time for cleaning up materials before moving onto another activity. Repeat this every time a new material will be added to the classroom.

Plan Ahead

Look at each of the lesson plans for the day. Gather materials from your learning area shelves. The more organized you keep those areas, the more efficient you will be at finding the correct materials. Make sure you have any additional supports (visual/physical) for your lessons.

Daily Schedule

Your classroom schedule should be consistent and provide time for activities in various groupings. Lessons should alternate the level of physical activity involved as much as possible. If one lesson requires sitting, the next should include movement. See p. 136 for an example schedule and alternative pacing.

Transition Tips

Classroom environments with positive transition activities assist children with learning daily routines and rules while lessening potential behavior-related issues. Transition activities are easy to incorporate by using fun, interactive songs and chants between activities throughout the school day. Songs and chants from *Get Set for School* provide a perfect transition for preschool classrooms.

