

Child Care Provider Tip Sheets

Learning Centers

What is a learning center?

A learning center is an area where materials that have similar uses are stored. These materials are sorted by type. Each set of toys is stored in a separate container, but is close to related materials. Children can easily get these materials out independently.

A **book center** is usually a shelf with a wide variety of reading materials for different age groups or reading levels, like board books for infants and toddlers and paperback books for preschoolers.

A **fine motor center** could include small building toys (Legos, Duplos, Lincoln Logs, etc.), puzzles (knobbed, framed or floor), manipulatives (lacing cards, pegs with peg boards, or links and gears), and art supplies (drawing, painting, 3D and collage tools).

An **art center** could include drawing materials (markers, crayons and paper), paints (tempera, watercolor or finger paints), 3D objects (clay, play dough or wood), collage materials (cotton balls, feathers, glue, yarn/string, etc.), and tools (scissors, stencils, tape, etc.).

A **music center** could include anything that children can use to create or listen to rhythm, tones or other types of music, including instruments, noise-making toys or players for recorded music. It may also include props for dancing, like scarves.

A **block center** includes blocks for building (not interlocking) and accessories (people or animal figurines, and vehicles).

A dramatic play center has materials for children to use while pretending. Dress-up clothes, dolls, soft animals, pots and pans, pretend food, small play furnishings and child-size house furniture is all appropriate for a dramatic play center.

A **math/number center** includes items related to numbers, shapes and quantity. It can include items from such categories as counting, measuring, comparing quantities, recognizing shapes and becoming familiar with written numbers.

A **nature/science center** includes materials from the following categories: collections of natural objects (e.g., rocks, insects, seed pods), living things to care for and observe (house plants, gardens, pets), nature/science books, games or toys and nature/science activities for cooking and experiments (like magnets, magnifying glasses, etc.).