

Creating a Calm Learning Environment

The kindergarten learning environment of a child should be free flowing, promoting play, exploration, learning and creativity. Teachers need to create a space that fosters connection, community and belonging. They should also ensure that children are well-represented in the classroom by providing ample room for individual, small and large group play. A space that feels like home – with materials arranged invitingly on tables or shelves – invites children in and sparks their curiosity. Teachers can also use natural light, lamps, and baskets. In addition, the outdoor classroom should be as well-planned and intentional as the indoor spaces. The following play spaces are essential for a well-balanced curriculum to ensure successful learning outcomes for all children.

- **Creative art/ cognitive activities** – Easel painting, pasting, drawing, scissor cutting, and sensory experiences need to be accessible for the children to play with daily. These activities can be changed am/pm. Create tubs with lids and rotate activities. Perhaps plan messy activities in the morning and calmer, sensory activities in the afternoon.
- **Collage trolley** – paste, scissors, paper, recycled materials like string, textured paper, patty pans, pom poms, icy pole sticks, leaves, corks, etc. Consider objects collected from nature. Educators to ensure this trolley is restocked, tidy and ready for the day.
- **Paper** is cut to size for drawing with **crayons, pencils sharpened**, and **textas** ready to use for all creative art experiences.
- **Easel** is set with painting/printing experiences with smocks and drying rack close by with paper accessible and ready to go. Consider adding a book, flowers and speaker, playing calm classical music near the easel to inspire painting ideas.
- **Sensory experience tabletop and large trough** - with shallow trays and small baskets for animals or utensils. Consider play dough and clay with placemats, flour, water, shaving cream, wood shavings and natural materials – pebbles, water, logs, bark & shells. Visit Play to learn 100 sensory ideas. -<https://playtolearnpreschool.us>
- **Puzzles**- ensuring all puzzles have pieces for the children to complete and that they are developmentally suitable for all children attending the program. Implement **Large floor puzzles** and **board** games where educators can sit and model positive behaviours and interactions.

- **A calm area** where children can have some time to play quietly in a space that is safe and secure. Add a basket with books, weighted blanket, sensory fidget toys, small figurines, pillows and silky scarves, headphones with calm music and soft sheer material to enclose this space. Visit the O T Toolbox Calm Down Corner Ideas <https://www.theotttoolbox.com>
- **Imaginative play** -Home corner is well equipped with props – stove, fridge, microwave etc, and have a table and chairs for the children to sit and play. Tea set x 4, food, mixing bowls and spoons and carry baskets etc. Add dress ups and a large mirror. **Ensure that at there is adequate space to move and role play.** For more ideas visit- Play to learn List of Ultimate Home Corner Ideas <https://playtolearnpreschool.us>
- **Imaginative play** – Provide tables for one or two children: Add soft plain fabric to cover the table, small baskets with props like natural resources (shells, pebbles, gumnuts, logs and leaves etc) Add small wooden boxes, wooden people, cars and animals. Intentionally plan props to enable predictable and open-ended play opportunities where children can connect in a play space that is not too overwhelming.
Learning 4 kids <https://www.learning4kids.net>
- **Construction Play/ Block Corner – Floor & Tables** – Add construction to containers or baskets that are labelled and accessible for the children to self- select. Provide enough construction for larger group play and add simple props like loose parts, (cardboard rolls, pinecones, logs, wooden road, dinosaurs’ jungle animals, cars and trucks, wooden people, dolls and blankets, small wooden blocks)
Little lifelong learners <https://www.littlelifelonglearners.com>
- **Large body, sensory break movement station** – Create a space that allows children the opportunity to have a large body sensory break. Mini trampoline, wobble board, bean bags with hoops or small buckets, sensory break cards suggesting break ideas, yoga mat with visuals and musical instruments. Subscribe the Inspired Treehouse for more ideas <https://theinspiredtreehouse.com>
- **Library** – Cosy couch, chairs or bean bags, a **coffee table, plants and a lamp** creating a space where children can enjoy exploring books. Add a variety of books and **carefully arrange books on the shelf** for the children to self-select.
- Add **plants** and more **natural light** to create a warm and relaxing ambiance. Indoor/ outdoor play will also help to optimise children’s learning opportunities, allow children time to build friendships and give educators time to model positive interactions and build trusting relationships with all children.
- Lastly, **calming music** can influence the autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for regulating involuntary bodily functions like heart rate and breathing. **Soothing music** can help slow down the heart rate and promote deeper, more relaxed breathing, helping children feel more at ease.

Useful Websites:

ACECQA – <https://acecqa.gov.au>

- An environment for learning
- The environment as the third teacher
- Create the perfect learning space.

K U Children’s Services -<https://inclusionagency NSW act.org.au/resources>