

## ECERS Minimum Materials Requirements for Early Childhood Programs

This document provides examples of ECERS-required materials at the “excellent” level of quality that are typically accessible to children and are recommended for use. This is not an exhaustive list. The types of materials recommended were included because they can be conveniently accessed, stored easily, and frequently sanitized in order to reduce the spread of germs (e.g., vinyl and plastic soft toys). This is especially encouraged during this time due to the current public health situation. Therefore, for safety and to avoid compromising children’s access to a variety of materials at all times, programs are advised to **only put out the amount of materials that are required at each center, store the rest, and rotate them daily/weekly to allow time for sanitization**. Similarly, limiting furnishings in centers to just what is needed to house materials and for play allows more space for children to move freely while they play without crowding. As the year progresses and circumstances change, children can be offered a greater quantity and broader selection of materials.

The chart below outlines the specific materials required for various items in the ECERS scale. These materials may be organized in a variety of centers/areas throughout the room (e.g., measuring cups can be in a Math Center and/or in the sand/water table, and “Table Toys” may include various fine motor and/or math materials). In addition, materials may overlap and be credited in more than one item (e.g. unifix cubes may be credited as both an interlocking fine motor material in Item 17 and a comparing quantities math material in Item 23). However, materials within one item may only be credited in one category within that item (e.g. unifix cubes credited as an interlocking fine motor material, may not be credited in any other category in the fine motor item) along with duplicates of the same item. Furthermore, any real food items (e.g., dried rice, beans, hard noodles, pasta) used as play materials are not considered appropriate. Special notes about specific material are indicated within the Item.

Use this document together with [additional resources](#) provided by the Division of Early Childhood Education to support planning for the school year. In particular, the [Birth-to-Five Blended Learning Implementation Guidance](#) provides specific strategies for in-person learning.

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<p><b>Item 15 Encouraging children’s use of books</b></p> <p>Staff encourage children’s interest in books when they create optimal settings for their use. In addition to a Reading Center or Library, there should be books on area-related topics throughout many classroom centers.</p> <p>35 books for 20 children on a wide variety of topics, such as diversity, nature/science, math/number books, and the current theme.</p>

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<p><b>Item 17 Fine Motor Materials</b></p> <p>Fine motor activities are those that require children to use the small muscles in their hands and fingers in coordination with their eyes to manipulate objects.</p> <p>10 choices, at least 1 type from each of the following categories and including varied levels of challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Interlocking building materials (e.g., Duplo, Bristle, Legos, Lincoln Logs)</li> <li>● Art materials (e.g., scissor, markers, crayons, pencils)</li> <li>● Manipulatives (e.g., links, beads, pegs and pegboards)</li> <li>● Puzzles (e.g., floor, framed, knobbed, with images representing diversity)</li> </ul> <p>*Interlocking cards to match together as a game are not credited as puzzles (e.g., a number matching game where the first piece has a printed number on it, while the second piece has a picture of items representing that number). These types of materials are not considered for this item, but may be considered in Item 23: Math Materials.</p>
<p><b>Item 18 Art</b></p> <p>Art materials provide children the opportunity to practice important fine motor skills (also captured in Item 17). These materials allow children to develop their creative expression by experimenting with shapes, lines, space and colors while making a unique product only they could have created. All materials must be accompanied by paper as needed or another surface for use such as drawing paper or an easel. In addition, all of the necessary materials must be present (e.g., collage materials must have some adhesive or paint must have brushes).</p> <p>1 material from each of the 5 categories, accompanied by paper and/or another surface suitable for carrying out artwork:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Drawing (e.g., crayons, markers, pencils, chalk)</li> <li>● Paints (e.g., tempera, water color, finger paint)</li> <li>● Three Dimensional (e.g., wood, pipe cleaners, cardboard boxes/rolls)</li> <li>● Collage (e.g., yarn, textured paper, cloth)</li> <li>● Tools (e.g., scissors, hole punch, dot paints, stamps and stamp pads, stencils)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Item 19 Music and Movement</b></p> <p>Music materials provide children the opportunity to create or listen to music. This includes the items listed below. Instruments can be homemade or commercially produced. Each complete musical instrument is considered one material (e.g., two sand blocks counts as one material).</p> <p>10 instruments, at least 1 per participating child if used in group time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● *Different types of instruments (e.g., bells, shakers, maracas, rhythm sticks, triangles). Credit is not given if all materials are of the same type.</li> </ul> <p>*Recorded music (e.g., a CD player with CDs) counts as 1 type of music material if used.</p>
<p><b>Item 20 Blocks</b></p> <p><b>Blocks</b> are materials that children use to build various types of structures. They do not restrict children by having pieces fit together in a special way. Only two types of blocks are considered: unit blocks and large</p>

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hollow blocks. Unit blocks come in various shapes and sizes and the smaller blocks represent fractions of the larger blocks. They can be made of different materials such as wood, plastic, cardboard, or foam. Hollow blocks come in different sizes and shapes. They are usually made of wood, cardboard, or hard plastic. They allow children to build bigger, sturdier structures.

Enough blocks should be available for 3 children to build sizeable independent structures at the same time (interlocking blocks not given credit here):

- Unit blocks (e.g., wood, hard foam, plastic)
- Hollow blocks

Accessories are toys used with blocks to stimulate block play. If use of these materials interfere with block play, they are not considered accessories.

Block Accessories should be available from 3 categories

- Small diverse people
- Vehicles
- Animals
- Other accessories that enhance block play (e.g. road signs, fences, trees, small buildings, etc.)

\*To make a sizable structure using the same type of blocks, each child would need a set of at least 30 small unit blocks or 10 large hollow blocks.

### Item 21 Dramatic Play

Dramatic Play is pretending or making believe. This type of play occurs when children act out roles that allow them to practice skills and attempt to understand what happens in their world. Thus, the materials allow children to use their imagination in richer and more meaningful play.

Materials and furniture for dramatic play include items that children use to act out roles and situations, such as dressing up, housekeeping, different kinds of work, fantasy play, and leisure play. Small people, figurines, dollhouses, etc. are not considered for this item.

Furnishings and props enough for number of children allowed in the Center:

- Child-sized household furnishings (e.g., stove, sink, refrigerator, small table and chairs, small crib if room)
- Household props (e.g., plates, utensils, pots, dolls, mirror, telephone)
- Dress up clothing items that are non-porous and easy to clean (e.g., wallet, purse, shoes, jewelry)
- Additional housekeeping props or a second theme (only one additional theme is required).  
Options include, but are not limited to: restaurant (apron, menus, play money), construction (tools and plastic hat), farmer/gardener (rakes, shovels, seed packets), or Post Office (mail box, envelopes, postcards)
- \*Diversity, 4 examples (e.g., dolls representing different races and ages, cultural food and utensils, toy wheelchair or walker)

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\*Material should consist of two contrasted items (e.g., sushi and a burrito or challah loaf and a croissant).

\*Please note that non-porous dress up clothing items are encouraged during this time due to the current public health situation. Porous items (including dresses, shirts, skirts, hats, pants, uniforms, etc.) may be offered to children once the situation changes.

**Item 22 Nature/Science**

Nature/Science materials and activities provide children with hands-on opportunities to explore and experiment with the natural world.

15 materials, some from each of the 5 categories:

- \*Living Things (e.g., plants, pets, outside garden)
- Collection of Natural Objects (e.g., shells, rocks, seeds, leaves)
- Factual Books/Pictures/Games
- Tools (e.g., magnets with objects, magnifying glass with objects to explore, color paddles, microscope, prism)
- \*Sand and/or water (both not required) with toys (e.g., measuring cups, small pails, digging tools). Offering water play in individual smaller tubs/bins is encouraged in order to avoid the spread of germs. In addition, this makes it easier to set up and clean up (e.g., staff discard the water in a small bin after a child uses it and refills it for another child). Handwashing is required after sand play and before and after water play.

\*Living Things: Each living thing is credited as one example if they are in separate containers. However, if multiple creatures are in one container, then only one example is credited. For example, **two** plants in the same container is credited as one living item, but two plants in separate containers/pots are credited as two items. Flower gardens, vegetable or herb gardens that the class has planted is counted as one item even though there are multiple plants. Living things that are difficult for children to view or that they do not notice, such as those located on high shelves, are not credited.

\*Sand and/or water: play can be offered in various types of containers (e.g., plastic containers, tubs, or water/sand table). There must be enough of the material/substance so children can dig, scoop, pour, fill containers and experiment with the material in a satisfying way; materials that do not have these properties (Styrofoam packing materials, pinecones, acorns, straw, slime, shaving cream, etc.) are not considered as sand/water substitutes because they cannot be used in the same way. Substitutes must provide the same experiences as sand/water and not present any health or safety issues (choking, getting stuck in noses/ears, or aspiration). Examples of creditable substitutes for sand/water include wet/dry substances that children can mold, shape, sculpt, and easily scoop and pour.

**Item 23 Math Materials and Activities**

Young children need many reinforced and hands-on experiences with developmentally appropriate materials to explore quantity, size, and shape in order to build the foundation for later abstract mathematical learning.

**Math Materials** are those that children can play with to learn and practice at concepts. Posters/books and displayed materials are not considered in this item. Play materials such as have printed numbers on them such as cash registers or telephones are considered in Item 25 and not here.

**Math activities** are usually staff initiated/directed and go beyond children’s use of materials. Math

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activities are set up by staff with the intended purpose of math learning. They may be offered during Center Time as a choice or during small or large group times as long as staff directs the activity toward math learning. Examples may include setting up a balance scale with different types of materials to explore weight or setting out safe thermometers and containers of cold and warm water to show children how to measure and compare temperatures.

10 different appropriate materials, at least 3 from each of the three categories:

- Counting/Comparing Quantities (e.g., unifix cubes, dominoes, dice, pegboards with numbers, objects to count in numbered trays)
- Measuring/Comparing Sizes (e.g., tape measure, thermometer, measuring cups, spoons, rulers, height charts)
- Familiarity with Shapes (e.g., shape sorters, shape puzzles, geoboards, attribute blocks, shape stencils)

**Item 25 Understanding Written Numbers**

Written numbers or print numbers are symbols for quantity. Young children need to be supported to understand a written number’s connection to its quantity because print numbers in themselves carry no meaning until they can be associated with something (symbols, pictures, objects) that represents the quantity. With staff support and the presence of displays and materials with numbers and symbols to represent quantity, children can learn the name of numbers and the quantity they represent.

Some print numbers in display materials and at least 3 different play materials that show the meaning of numbers:

- Print numbers on display (e.g., posters with numbers and corresponding pictures, center labels with numbers)
- Play materials with numbers (e.g., telephones, stencils, play money, numbers on furnishings)
- Play materials showing the meaning of numbers (e.g., number puzzles with corresponding pictures, matching picture/number cards, pegs with numbered peg boards)

**Item 26 Promoting Acceptance of Diversity**

Creating a culturally welcoming and affirming environment is one of the main principles of the [New York State Education Department’s Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#). The play materials and the physical environment of the classroom should represent and value diversity. Diversity refers to the differences found in groups of people with regards to race, religion, culture, ability, age, and gender. Examples of diversity in materials include: dolls of different races or cultures; images in books; easily visible pictures on bulletin boards; music from a variety of cultures played; songs sung in the home language of bilingual children enrolled. For children to see differences, they must have materials to compare. When there is a requirement of examples of diversity within materials, the contrast of two different things is considered one example. It is possible to have 1 example within the same material, such as a poster showing people of different races.

**Classroom materials** include: pictorial materials; all toys; all print, music, and audio-visual materials in the classroom and must represent the following 5 types listed below in the chart. Common examples are listed below.

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10 examples of diversity, at least 1 in each of the following:

- Books
- Displayed pictures
- Accessible play materials with at least 2 types of dramatic play props representing different races or cultures (e.g., dolls of different skin tones; play foods such as tacos, sushi, pizza, a burger, a croissant; a wheelchair, a walker, a guide dog)