



Environment Kit Idea Guide 24-36 months

This Idea Guide will provide a short list of activities your program can try doing, using materials from the 24-36 month Environment Kit. This is not a complete list of all possible activities or materials that could be required for formal rating, accreditation, etc. Use this guide to inspire new ideas unique to your program goals.

CONNECTING QUALITY ENVIRONMENTS TO QUALITY PRACTICE

FEBRUARY 2018

YoungStar Environment Kit - Idea Guide 24-36 months

by DCF – Division of Early Care and Education

Pretending with a Purpose



As critical thinking skills and the ability to sustain attention develop, children can create and be involved in interactive play scenarios like puppet play. Children can use this opportunity to express feelings as they play. Caregivers can support children as they experiment with trial and error approaches to resolve conflict. For example, if a child is using one of the *Zoo Friends Puppet Pals* (2 years and up) to tell his friend to "Stop", the caregiver could encourage the child to express what behavior or action they want their friend to stop and how it makes them feel, "I don't want you to push on my antlers, that hurts me." Giving children the words to use to work through conflict during play will help build their effectiveness in using these strategies in real life.

Modeling real scenarios in a dramatic play setting can help children learn important interpersonal skills like manners, taking turns and how to work together as a group. Caregivers can use

the *Toddler Kitchenware Set* (2 years and up) to encourage children to set the table or arrange the dishes needed for a picnic. This is also a great opportunity to incorporate math learning. Encourage the children to count how many people will be eating and place the correct number of utensils for each space, one fork for each plate. During the pretend meal, model manners, "Jackie, can you please pass the milk? Thank you."



Music and Movement Outdoors

The sense of freedom children feel in a safe outdoor environment can help inspire creativity and spark joy. Incorporate music in a child's outdoor play by adding items such as *Juggling Scarves* while you play their favorite songs electronically or allow them to dance along to the music you play on the *Soft Sounds Wooden Animal Shakers* (6 months and up). Encourage them to move their bodies swaying the scarves through the air.

Open-Ended Art Experiences

Allowing children to express themselves through open-ended "process art" is identified as best practice and helps support the child's sense of self. They feel pride identifying their unique creation when surrounded by other artwork. Caregivers can offer materials and supplies, such as paper and *Crayola Washable Finger Paints*, which children can use to create whatever they want. Allow the children to mix colors and talk about what they see and feel, "What is happening when you mix the yellow and red?" Instead of offering general praise such as "good job", mention details that you notice, "I like how you used your fingertips to make these yellow dots." When they decide their creation is finished, display it on a wall, create a book of their artwork or send it home for the family to enjoy.



CONSIDER HOW ACTIVITIES ALIGN
WITH WMEELS AND YOUR PROGRAM'S
CHOSEN ASSESSEMENT SYSTEM



Supporting Self Care Skills

As children's fine motor skills develop, they are able to perform basic self-help skills such as buttoning their shirt and zipping a coat. The *Teddy Wear Toddler Learning Toy* (18 months and up) allows children to practice these skills in a fun way. Caregivers can encourage persistence when they see a child become frustrated and offer support when necessary.

Math and Manipulatives

Two-year-olds are building their knowledge of basic math concepts (colors, shapes, numbers, etc.) throughout their daily play. Caregivers can interact intentionally during this play to understand what the child already knows and to challenge them to gain new skills. When a child is playing with a toy, such as the *Tall Stack Pegs and Pegboard Set* (2 years and up), ask the child what colors they used to create their "tower". Ask them to count the pieces or explain the pattern that they used. Maybe they chose all blue pegs. This lets you know that they are able to sort by at least one attribute, color.

Acknowledge what you see, "I can see that you chose all of the blue pegs." See if they can explain their thought process, "Can you tell me why?" Do not be surprised if they say, "Because blue is my favorite color." They may have used a red, blue pattern and when you ask them why, they might point to the red and blue stripes on their shirt showing you that they can recognize and repeat simple patterns.

Challenge their ability to count one ring at a time as they place them on the *1 to 5 Ring Counter* (24 months and up).

Children sort, compare and measure as they begin to notice differences in height, shape, and other aspects of the objects they see in their environment. The *Nuts, Bolts Pattern Cards* (2 years and up) challenge children to look at the card and choose the correct bolt matching size and color and then using their fine motor skills, they can fasten it to the card with the corresponding nut. Caregivers can use language to help children sort through these items. Think out loud with the child using math language and "I wonder" statements, "I wonder which bolt is wide enough to fill this hole." Provide clues that assist the child's thought process without giving the answer with "I notice" statements, "I notice that the picture on the card is yellow. Hmm... What do you think that means?" Thinking out loud with the child helps influence how they think and problem solve on their own.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE (DAP)

Developmental appropriateness is based on the interests and individual abilities of each child. Evidence is gathered through interactions with and observations of the child and from information shared by the child's family. Taking this information into consideration, caregivers can determine if an activity or material needs to be added or adapted to meet individual needs and unique learning styles.

In order for children to take advantage of a developmentally appropriate environment, materials must be accessible, meaning children can reach and use furnishings, equipment, and materials independently. DAP environments support successful child-initiated play. When balanced with intentionally planned, teacher-initiated activities, a foundation for well-rounded learning is created.

This foundation is strengthened with positive interactions and trusting relationships. Caregivers cultivate these relationships by being involved in a child's play, having frequent positive interactions and connecting with family members to ensure their care expectations are being met.

Reflecting on your practice:

- Are materials and activities accessible and varied enough to meet each child's developmental needs?
- Do you speak to the adults and children in your program using a positive tone of voice?
- Do you include yourself and encourage others to join a child's play?
- Are families encouraged to share information regarding their child's development and do they feel part of the program's community?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact your **YoungStar Consultant** or locate your local **Child Care Resource and Referral Agency** at: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice>

YoungStar Evaluation Criteria

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/rating-criteria>