

Effective Preschool Block Centers

A block area is a space where children can explore and use their imaginations as they elaborately build both up and out. Additionally, unit blocks support children learning math concepts as they play with the rectangles, squares, triangles, and cylinders and begin to recognize their relationships with one another – two of the smaller square blocks make up one of the larger rectangle blocks- wow! Successful block play for preschoolers happens when there are plenty of organized, easy to access blocks and accessories, in a large, out of traffic area.

True block play needs a lot of blocks and a lot of space! Block areas can include a variety of block types, such as wooden, plastic, cardboard, homemade, vinyl-covered, foam, solid, or hollow. When selecting the type and amount of blocks, consider the ages of the children and their ability to build complex structures. Older children who are able to build sizable structures will need more blocks. A general rule of thumb recommends 200 blocks for 2-year-olds, 300 blocks for 3-year-olds, and 400 blocks for 4-year-olds. In addition, keep in mind the space needed for block building. Successful block areas are sizable enough to allow for at least three children to independently balance and build complex structures (think of large buildings and long roads). Remember, larger blocks also need larger areas.

Are you seeing conflicts in the block area? In addition to making sure there are enough blocks available for multiple children, observing play can help understand the cause of the conflict. If children are accidentally knocking over each other's structures, more space might be needed. If children are fighting over the people or animals, perhaps more accessories would help. If children all want to use the same "popular" blocks, maybe it's time to add more of those specialized blocks (archways, ramps).

As with all areas in a preschool setting, organization is key. Smaller blocks and accessories can fit in labeled bins. However, sorting and storing larger blocks by size and shape on shelves allows children to more easily view and access the materials. Adding labels with outlines of the shapes to the shelves can also help with easier clean up!



Preschoolers are capable of more elaborate structures that require enough blocks and enough space.



While three children are cooperatively building in the space, you would want to make sure there is enough space should they choose to build independently.