

Blocks

ECERS-R Indicator	Why is this important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks need to be accessible a substantial portion of the day. • At least two types of blocks and a variety of accessories accessible daily. • Blocks need to be sorted by type. <p>Definition: Substantial portion of the day – One-third of the program’s daily operating hours. Operating hours begin with the earliest time children are allowed to arrive and continue until the latest time children are allowed to stay in care. – see page 251 for examples*</p> <p>Definition: Accessible – children don’t have to ask the teacher to get/open materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks are considered one of the basic play materials for young children. Blocks do NOT include small interlocking pieces that fit together (such as Legos or Lincoln Logs). Those are considered in Fine Motor. Different types of blocks include: Unit blocks, Large Hollow Blocks, and Homemade blocks. Unit Blocks come in sets with different sizes and shapes. Unit blocks should be able to be combined with another unit block to create a larger shape. For example two triangles can become a square or rectangle. Large Hollow Blocks are typically at least a foot in length and allow preschool children to create larger structures that support dramatic play. For example they may create a house or a boat. Homemade blocks can be made from food boxes, tissue boxes, milk cartons, plastic containers or even wood cut into shapes. Preschool age children build more complex structures complete with bridges, well-balanced building with many parts, and roads that intersect and go to imaginary places. Children learn about math concepts, size, shape, balance, cause and effect, special relationships, and many more concepts from block play.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of accessories including transportation toys, people and animals (at least 5 of each) need to be accessible a substantial portion of the day. • Accessories should be sorted by type and stored near the blocks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessories are toys used with blocks to stimulate or expand block play. Accessories help children to be more creative with the blocks. With accessories, block structures can move from a structure to a farm with a barn that includes animals and farm trucks/equipment with roads to the field. Accessories allow for expansion of block play. • Storing accessories near the blocks help the children know they are meant to be used with the blocks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spaced used for blocks play should be out of traffic, on a steady surface and be large enough for three or more children to build independently at the same time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children should be able to successfully balance, build, and create structures without undue interference from others. There should be enough space to accommodate the larger structures children might want to build, such as long roads or larger buildings. • A steady surface is necessary so the blocks do not easily fall over when stacked.

<p>Blocks and accessories should be stored on open, labeled shelves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Open shelves allow children to see and reach blocks and accessories independently without having to ask for help. They also encourage children to be able to clean up blocks independently. Labels for the blocks and the accessories help children know where these things can be found and where they go when they are done using them. Since preschool children aren't expected to be able to read, pictures or outlines of blocks are better than just the words.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some block play should be available outdoors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When blocks are available outdoors, it means that children have more opportunities for active block play without the space and noise restrictions associated with being indoors.
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*All About ECERS-R by Debbie Cryer, Thelma Harms and Cathy Riley

SOURCE: *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS)*

