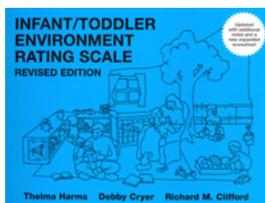


Free Play

ITERS-R Indicator	Why is this important?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free play occurs for much of the day, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting (use Child Care Aware weather chart). <p>Definition: Free Play – means that the child is permitted to select materials and companions and as far as possible, to manage play independently.</p> <p>Definition: Much of the day – means that most of the time that any child is awake and able to play. No wait times or inactive times longer than 3 minutes. If any child is prevented from reaching and using materials for a total of 20 minutes during the 3 – hour observation much of the day cannot be given credit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having sufficient free play is important in infant/toddler programs because it is during free play that children can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make their own choices, tailoring their learning to their personal needs. Interact with others to the extent that their preferences determine and their limited social skills allow. Choose to play and learn in the way that is most effective for their own personality, following their interests and working on the skills that they really need to develop.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to the basic supervision of children's safety, staff are actively involved in facilitating children's play throughout the day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help children get materials they need. Help children use materials that are hard to manage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infants and toddlers typically want to do their own things, but sometimes it helps when staff show how to make a toy work, or help to clean up periodically to avoid clutter. Each child will require different amounts of help, depending on the child's abilities and the nature of the activity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ample and varied toys and materials and much equipment provided for free play. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By having ample and varied toys, materials and equipment, this allows children to have many choices of appropriately challenging and interesting toys, materials, and equipment to use during free play.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision used as an educational interaction. At least 2 instances must be observed during observation – see page 390-391 in All About ITERS for examples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using supervision as an educational interaction will encourage extra learning during free play. It is important to do so without intruding.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff add materials to stimulate interest during free play at least once a month – see examples on page 392 in All About ITERS. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring out toys not used earlier that day. Rotate materials. Do new activities with children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add or rotating materials will increase the children's learning opportunities, widening their knowledge and encouraging new discoveries. They gain more from new toys.



SOURCE: *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)*