

Thinking More about Space and Furnishings



ECERS-R

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements for items found in the Space and Furnishings subscale. The focus is primarily on indicators at the 3, 5, and 7 levels. It is important to review each item entirely to ensure that no indicators at the 1 or “inadequate” level apply to the classroom. Answering the questions and referring to the ECERS-R will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the ECERS-R (spiral bound edition published in 2005) when completing the questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on pages 5-6 in the ECERS-R and the definitions of common terms on pages 6-7. It will also be helpful to refer to a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at ncrlap.org). There are many questions, so completing them all will likely take several reflection/review sessions.

The items included here consider the many ways the spaces, indoors and outdoors, are a foundation for children’s experiences. Appropriate furnishings, equipment, and space for children’s activities support children’s behavior and development. There is a focus on various aspects of the space, including arrangement, accessibility, displayed materials, and furnishings to support play, learning, and relaxation, all of which form the physical environment where quality child care takes place.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question, look at the item in the ECERS-R and check any Notes for Clarification or NC Additional Notes to identify the specific indicator and requirement to which it refers.
- Describe the current practices that occur when answering the questions. Remember, this is not about a “right answer” but rather a way to build understanding about what occurs every day. In the reflection section at the end, it can be helpful to add ideas about future plans or changes.
- Using the worksheet on an ongoing basis can help verify that the space and furnishings function to support children’s positive experiences. It can help identify barriers in the child care environment for use in planning modifications.
- Answering the questions with someone else (co-teachers, administrators, technical assistance specialists, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

Date(s) completed: _____ Classroom name/age group: _____

Worksheet completed by: _____

ITEM 1 Indoor Space (p. 10–11)

Consider the classroom space:

Is the space ample (e.g., furnishings do not crowd the space, it is easy to move around)? **Y / N**

Are the play areas large enough for the type of play intended in each space? **Y / N**

Can teachers easily access spaces needed to meet the routine care needs of children? **Y / N**

Are there provisions for:

Sound absorption: Is the noise level controlled, such that it is not hard to hear conversations? **Y / N** If **No**, what steps could be taken to absorb sound or otherwise reduce the volume?

Lighting: Is there natural light? **Y / N** If **yes**, can it be controlled such as with blinds or curtains? **Y / N**

Ventilation: Is there good air circulation? **Y / N** Can this be controlled by classroom staff, such as by opening screened windows, controlling a fan, etc.? **Y / N**

Consider accessibility to the building, the classroom, and a bathroom for individual with disabilities:

- Stairs: Are there paths to the classroom and a bathroom without stairs? **Y / N**
- Doorways: Are the openings at least 32 inches wide? **Y / N**
- Door handles: Do all doors (or gates, if used) include handles or options for opening that are easy to open with limited use of hands rather than knobs or slide latches? **Y / N**
- Thresholds: Are all thresholds under ½ inch high? If between ¼-½ inch high, are they beveled? **Y / N**

Are there concerns with cleanliness or any repair issues that need to be addressed such as peeling paint or cracked floor tiles? **Y / N**

ITEM 2 Furniture for routine care, play, and learning (p. 12–13)

Does each child enrolled have (check all that apply):

- A chair and space at a table for meals and activities
- A cubby for personal belongings
- A cot or mat for rest/nap

Are there enough low open/shelves or other storage for classroom materials so that they are easily accessible to children? **Y / N**

Is there enough furniture for children's use in play? **Y / N**

Is all furniture in good repair? **Y / N**

If enrolled, do children with disabilities have all needed adaptive furniture? **Y / N / NA**

Is it easy to access routine care furniture, such as nap provisions and cubbies? **Y / N**

Is there furniture for woodworking, sand/water play, or an easel? **Y / N**

While children are seated, check to see:

If their feet can touch the floor easily (not just their toes) while seated back in their chair, without scooting forwards.

If the table is a comfortable height and children can place their arms on the table top without raising their elbows.

Number of children for whom the chairs are child-sized: _____

Number of children for whom the table(s) are child-sized: _____

ITEM 3 Furnishings for relaxation and comfort (p. 14)

List the soft furnishings (other than soft toys) accessible in the classroom, making sure to include only those that are clean and in good repair: _____

Are enough soft furnishings gathered together to create a cozy area? **Y / N** Hint: Think about the size and design of the furnishings and see the Notes for Clarification for examples of a cozy area. If **yes**, describe the cozy area and consider whether it is a nice place to relax and be comfortable: _____

Are cozy areas protected from active play, either by being physically separated in the space or teacher intervention if active play occurs? **Y / N** Hint: In a cozy area, there should not be any play materials that would promote active or noisy play.

The children can use a cozy area during these times:

Total time a cozy area is accessible daily:

Are there soft furnishings in more than one area of the classroom? **Y / N**

The classroom includes _____ soft toys for children's use. Hint: Check the Notes for Clarification for the number required, based on children's ages and the number enrolled.

ITEM 4 Room arrangement (p. 15)

Are similar materials organized together in defined interest areas? Hint: See the Notes for Clarification for the definition of an interest center. **Y / N**

The total number of interest centers is _____.

List the interest centers provided in the classroom: _____

If enrolled, are children with disabilities able to use most of the spaces independently? **Y / N / NA**

Are all areas used by children easy to supervise? **Y / N** If No, list supervision challenges (high shelves, corners, or routine care areas that cause adults to turn their back to the children, etc.): _____

Are all of the quiet centers separated from active centers? **Y / N**

Are most areas set up to discourage children and adults from walking through centers as they move around the classroom? **Y / N** If No, list areas where play is sometimes interrupted: _____

Think about how play materials are stored and organized:

Are the materials stored so children can reach them? **Y / N**

Does organization allow children can see what is available? **Y / N**

Can children open storage containers independently? **Y / N**

Are there labels or other guidance provided so children know where materials are stored? **Y / N**

List additional materials available to rotate into the centers:

How frequently are materials added or rotated? _____

ITEM 5 Space for privacy (p. 16)

List any areas in the classroom that are always limited for use by 1-2 children at a time: _____

What strategies are used to maintain the limit of 1-2 children in these areas? _____

Can children using these areas be easily seen from any other part of the classroom? **Y / N**

The children can use the space(s) for privacy during these times:

Total time a space for privacy is accessible daily:

The following activities are set up in the space(s) for privacy: _____

ITEM 6 Child-related display (p. 17)

Consider the display in the classroom, including children’s work, bulletin boards, parent information, and all other materials (check all that apply):

- Materials are appropriate and interesting for the children in the group.
- There is more children’s work than materials for parents/adults and teacher-made or purchased commercial materials.
- Children are represented in the display. If present, list examples: _____

- There is display that relates to their recent activities. If present, list examples: _____

- Much of the display is at child’s eye-level.
- Of the children’s work, there is more individualized work than projects that look similar.
- The display includes three-dimensional work, such as playdough, wood, or cardboard sculptures. If present, list examples: _____

ITEM 7 Space for gross motor play (p. 18-19)

Check for safety hazards in all indoor and outdoor spaces used for children’s gross motor play. Are any of the following common hazards present? Please note this is not a complete list of possible hazards. Hint: Refer to the document NCRLAP’s Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment for specific measurements.

- Not enough cushioning under and in the fall zones of gross motor equipment
- Fall zones are not large enough around gross motor equipment
- Equipment spacing is too close
- Outdoor space is not fully fenced, or fence height is less than 4 ft.

List the gross motor space(s) used outdoors: _____

Is the outdoor space adequate for this group of children? **Y / N**

Describe the space(s) used for indoor gross motor activities, such as on bad weather days? _____

Consider how children get to the outdoor space: Is the route quick and easy to use for all the children and adults? **Y / N**

Are the spaces for gross motor organized so activities are protected from interruption? **Y / N**

List different types of ground surfaces and the types of play for which they are used: _____

Does the outdoors space have some protection from elements? **Y / N**

List the convenient features available while outdoors (Hint: see the indicator for examples):

ITEM 8 Gross motor equipment (p. 20 -21)

Is gross motor equipment used for an hour or more each day, including bad weather days? **Y / N** (Hint: See Terms Used Throughout the Scale on page 7 of the ECERS-R for a definition of “weather permitting” and/or refer to the Child Care Weather Watch Chart at ncrlap.org). **Y / N**

List the gross motor equipment currently used by the children. Hint: Only include materials that are age-appropriate and in good repair.

Outdoor Stationary Equipment	Outdoor Portable Equipment	Indoor Stationary Equipment	Indoor Portable Equipment

*If children with disabilities are enrolled, place a check mark next to the equipment they can use.

