



# Thinking More about Space and Furnishings

## ECERS-3

**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-3 will build familiarity with requirements, while reflecting on current practices and situations.

**Preparation:** Refer to the ECERS-3 (spiral binding on the top, published in 2015) when completing questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the Scoring System on page 9. It will also be helpful to refer to a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at [ncrlap.org](http://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 activities support children’s behavior and development. There is a focus on various aspects of the space, including arrangement, displayed materials, furnishings, and equipment, 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-3 and check any Notes for Clarification and/or NC Additional Notes to identify the specific indicator and requirement to which it refers.
- Describe current practices when answering questions. Remember, this is not about a “right answer,” but rather a way to build understanding about what occurs every day.
- Using the worksheet on an ongoing basis can help verify that the space and furnishings support children’s positive experiences. This information 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, health consultants, 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. 14-15)

Consider the classroom space for the maximum number of children and teachers:

Is it adequate, with enough space for furnishings and people? **Y / N**

Is it ample (e.g., not crowded, easy to move around, with plenty of space to play and complete daily routines)? **Y / N**

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

If **no** to any, describe any ways furnishings can be rearranged, changed, or removed to provide easier movement and use of space: \_\_\_\_\_

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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 reduce the noise volume (carpets, soft furnishings, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Lighting: Is there natural light (windows or skylights)? **Y / N** If **yes**, can it be controlled with blinds or curtains that allow for light during play and dimmed light during rest/nap? **Y / N**

Ventilation/comfortable temperature: 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, a bathroom, and the playground for individuals with disabilities:

- Stairs: Is there a route to the classroom and a bathroom without stairs? **Y / N**
- Doorways: Are openings at least 32 inches wide? **Y / N**
- Door handles: Do all doors (or gates, if used) have lever handles or push bars for easy opening with limited use of hands (no round 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 any concerns with cleanliness or any repair issues that need to be addressed such as peeling paint or cracked floor tiles? **Y / N** Are most surfaces durable and easy to clean? **Y / N**

**Item 2 Furnishings for care, play, and learning (p. 16-17)**

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

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

Are spaces for personal belongings located so children can use them independently? **Y / N**

Are cots/mats stored in the classroom? **Y / N**

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

Are there enough low/open shelves or other storage so children can easily access materials? **Y / N**

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

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

List all soft furnishings accessible in the classroom, making sure to include only those that are clean and in good repair. **Hint:** Soft toys are considered in other items. List only soft furnishings here: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there enough soft furnishings gathered together to provide substantial softness? **Hints:** See the definition of “Accessible” on ECERS-3 p. 10 and the Notes for Clarification for indicator 5.2 for examples of substantial softness. **Y / N** If **yes**, describe the area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are the soft furnishings accessible for at least 1 hour during the observation period? **Hints:** The observation period is defined on p. 7 of the ECERS-3. More information about this requirement can be found in the “Accessibility and time requirements” section of the Thinking More about Learning Activities worksheet.

**Y / N** And during other free play periods throughout the day? **Y / N**

List examples of classroom furniture that is designed for specific types of play (e.g., dramatic play kitchen, sand or water table, easel, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there at least three examples of furniture for specific activities? **Y / N**

While children are seated, check to see:

Can their feet touch the floor easily (not just their toes) while seated all the way back in their chair? **Y / N**

Number for whom the chairs are child-sized: \_\_\_\_\_

Can they place their arms on the table top without raising their elbows? **Y / N**

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

\_\_\_\_\_

**Item 3 Room arrangement for play and learning (p. 18-19)**

Are similar materials organized together in defined interest areas? **Hint:** See the Notes for Clarification on pg. 18 for the definitions of a play center and an interest center. **Y / N**

List the play centers in the classroom:

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List the interest centers in the classroom:

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The total number of play centers is: \_\_\_\_\_

The total number of interest centers is: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the interest center list include a cozy area? **Hint:** See the Notes for Clarification for indicator 5.2 for the definition of a cozy area. **Y / N**

Are all the interest centers accessible to children during play periods throughout the day and for at least 25 minutes during the observation period? **Y / N**

Does the space include pathways to move around the room without disrupting activities? **Y / N**

If enrolled, are children with disabilities able to use all play areas independently? **Y / N / NA**

Are all areas of the classroom easy to supervise? **Y / N** If **no**, list supervision challenges (shape of the room/corners, high shelves, or routine care areas that cause adults to turn their back to the children, etc.):

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

Think about how interest areas are defined and equipped:

Are spaces set up for convenience (e.g., art, sensory play)? **Y / N**

Do all areas have enough space for children to play (e.g., popular areas or those that include active play like blocks or dramatic play)? **Y / N**

**Item 4 Space for privacy (p. 20-21)**

List any play or interest areas that are always limited for use by 1-2 children at a time: \_\_\_\_\_

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What strategies, including physical set up, classroom rules, cues for children, etc., are used to maintain the limit of 1-2 children in these areas so children can be away from the group or play without intrusion?

Can other materials be brought into the space for privacy when a child wants to use them alone? **Y / N**

Consider access to the space(s) for privacy. **Hints:** See the definition of “Accessible” on ECERS-3 page 10. There is also more information about this concept and the 3-hour observation period in the Thinking More about Learning Activities worksheet:

Children can use the space(s) for privacy during these times during the observation period and throughout the day.

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Total time a space for privacy is accessible during the 3-hour observation:

**Item 5 Child-related display (p. 22-23)**

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

- Items for children are displayed around the room, in many different areas
- All materials are appropriate, and many are related to current topics of children’s interest
- The display includes photos of the children currently enrolled
- At least 1/3 of the total display is children’s work
- The display includes three-dimensional work, such as playdough, wood or cardboard structures

Consider teacher’s interactions that use display (check rarely, some of the time, or frequently):

	Rarely	Some of the time	Frequently
Talking with children about display during group times			
Talking with children about display during play/routines			
Using display to encourage conversations with children			
Pointing out or reading words on display to children			

**Item 6 Space for gross motor play (p. 24-25)**

List the gross motor spaces used indoors and outdoors: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Are these spaces large enough to allow for much active play for this group of children? **Y / N**

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

The total time indoor or outdoor spaces for gross motor are used during the 3-hour observation period is: **Hint:** See indicators with time requirements on p. 25. \_\_\_\_\_

What other times of the day are these spaces used? \_\_\_\_\_

Check for safety hazards in all indoor and outdoors 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 not large enough around gross motor equipment
- Equipment spacing is too close
- Open hooks at the top or bottom of swings
- Outdoors space is not fully fenced, or fence height is less than 4 feet

The route to access the outdoor space is quick and easy to use for all children. **Y / N**

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

Surface	Type of play
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

List convenient features in the outdoor space. **Hint:** See indicator 7.2 for examples.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Item 7 Gross motor equipment (p. 26-27)**

List the gross motor equipment current 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.

The total time indoor or outdoor gross motor equipment is used during the 3-hour observation period is:

**Hint:** See indicators with time requirements on p. 27. \_\_\_\_\_

What other times of the day involve the use of gross motor equipment? \_\_\_\_\_

List the skills encouraged by the outdoor and indoor gross motor equipment. **Hint:** Check indicator 3.3 on p. 27 for the number required.

Outdoor skills:

Indoor skills:

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Is there equipment that encourages at least seven different skills used everyday, even if outdoor play does not occur? **Y / N**

Do both indoor and outdoor equipment provide enough options to keep children interested and busy? **Y / N**

Are there options for practicing more advanced skills? **Hint:** See indicator 7.3 on p. 27 for examples. **Y / N**

**Reflection for future planning:** After completing this worksheet, it can be helpful to go back and think more about the answers. Were there any questions that were answered “no” instead of “yes”? Were there any questions where you struggled to provide written examples, or where the specific interactions considered do not occur daily, throughout the day? If so, this could help identify areas to work on. It can also be helpful to break bigger topics into smaller steps so that changes and progress can be easily recognized. Hopefully, this worksheet was a helpful tool in an ongoing self-study practice and will be useful in continuing with an action plan after completing the reflection questions below.

List areas where strengths were noted in space and furnishings:

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List areas where improvements could be made or there are new ideas to think about:

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Are there any issues you will work to change right away? Describe how so:

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Are there issue that will take more time to change? What were these and what resources/support may be needed?

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**Want to find out more?**

Not all ECERS-3 indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the ECERS-3 carefully and seek out other resources, as needed, since relying on these questions alone to prepare for an assessment will not be sufficient. We encourage you to review other resources on the [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org) website to stay informed about any updates and to continue to build your understanding of the ECERS-3 and the assessment process.

Register for free online training webinars. Some are live webinars; others are pre-recorded and offer training credits (contact hours). Call 1-866-362-7527 or register online at [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org).

Look for general information about the assessment process and specific ITERS-3 resources. These resources may offer ideas about what to focus on or to supplement ideas you were already considering. Check out the answers to the Frequently Asked Questions or send a new question to [ncrlap@uncg.edu](mailto:ncrlap@uncg.edu)

When planning for program enhancement, always consider the unique features of the classroom and facility such as ages and abilities of the children enrolled, the number of teachers in the classroom, and overall goals and/or philosophy. Programs may also seek advice from their DCDEE Child Care Consultant, local CCR&R and/or Smart Start Partnership TA specialists, a Child Care Health Consultant, or other child care agencies.



**References:**

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2015). Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale. (Third Edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

NC Additional Notes (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ncrlap.org>.