

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

PLAY EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS

CHILD CARE CENTRES AND FAMILY DAY CARE

There is no definitive list of toys and equipment that child care services must purchase. However, services must ensure that play equipment and materials provided are suitable for:

- the developmental stages of enrolled children
- the number of enrolled children
- all areas of child development and play
- carrying out the children's activity program¹.

All play equipment must be made from non-toxic materials and be in good repair, with no sharp, rough, loose or damaged parts that could pose a hazard to children². To limit risk of cross-infection, play equipment – particularly for babies and toddlers – must be washable. Materials provided should be non-toxic and safe for children's use.

Children using play equipment must be supervised at all times³. The level of supervision will depend upon the age of the children and the activity or play they are participating in. The younger the child or the more challenging the activity, the greater the need for close supervision.

Supporting the program of activities

Through observations of children and conversations with families, services should develop a program of activities suitable for each child's interests and skills, and supports their learning and development. The program should guide services in determining what play equipment and materials will be most appropriate to implement the program.

Play equipment and materials must be suitable for the number of children attending the service. For example, there should be sufficient numbers of play items so that several children are able to work together or beside each other without running out of equipment or materials to complete an activity or project.

Usually, the younger the child, the less able they are to wait or share. Consider the ages and numbers of children who will participate in any activity and make sure you have sufficient supplies.

There should also be sufficient numbers of equipment items so they can be rotated in order to create variety, while still providing a sufficient range of play options offered at any one time.

The program of activities must provide opportunities for children to develop their skills, abilities and potential in all developmental areas – social, cultural, physical, emotional, intellectual, language and creative⁴. Similarly, play equipment and materials must be available that support the program of activities and these areas of development⁵.

The following list of suggested items is not exhaustive. It provides suggestions for equipment for indoor and outdoor use that can support the range of developmental areas. Use it as a guide to stimulate your creativity. Some of the items are easy to make yourself; some can even be made by the children, with guidance and supervision.



Many items can provide opportunities across several development areas, providing versatility and value for money – and don't forget the endless play opportunities provided by cardboard boxes or other safe household or junk items.

Play equipment provided for babies and small children needs special consideration. All equipment items must be washable and there must be no loose or removable parts that present a choking hazard.

Infants

- soft, stable items to practise standing
- soft, comfy cushions or mats to play on
- things to climb on, crawl through, slide down – inside and outside (separate to equipment designed for older children if possible)
- things that can be manipulated or stacked – teething toys, rattles, shakers, squeeze toys, large soft balls, posting boxes, lightweight blocks, nesting/stacking toys
- things that can be pushed, pulled or ridden on
- things to look at, listen to, reach for and touch – brightly coloured mobiles, music tapes or CD's, wind-up musical toys, cardboard/plastic picture books, puppets, things with different textures, things with faces, patterns or contrasting colours.

Toddlers

Toddlers are on their feet, keen to explore and eager to practise their developing physical skills – but may still be a little wobbly. They will need support in their physical endeavours and also to share and play together with other children. Suggestions include:

- things for rocking, swinging, climbing on, crawling through or sliding down
- equipment for pushing, pulling, riding on, throwing or catching – toy cars, carts, pull along toys, push along toys, ride on toys, small bean bags, soft balls
- things for the sand pit – kitchen/cooking equipment, cars, trucks, buckets, spades and other digging and sand play equipment
- water play equipment – bubble-blowing equipment, water trough, boats, toy fish, measuring cups and pourers, things that float, things that sink
- stackable cups and large and medium blocks, small baskets, posting boxes with openings of different shapes, puzzles with two to eight pieces of varied materials, easy threading materials
- objects that can be sorted, classified, measured, ordered, matched – picture cards, sets of zoo/farm animals or fruit/vegetables, natural items from the garden
- creative/artistic equipment – paper, easels, non-toxic paint, jumbo crayons and pencils, non-toxic glue, safe natural and man-made collage materials, playdough, clay, cutters, scissors, card or heavy paper for cutting
- things for dress-ups and role-playing – range of ethnic and occupational dress-ups, puppets, props, multi ethnic/gender dolls, dolls' clothes, cots, prams, pushers, kitchen/cooking equipment, play food
- music and dance equipment – tapes, CDs, rattles, shakers, rhythm/percussion items, ribbons, scarves
- sturdy picture books, multi-textured books, books with messages about feelings, play telephones
- soft, comfortable cushions, bean bags or chairs for quiet times or reading, soft toys for cuddling
- pictures, posters, decorations, music or stories that promote acceptance of diversity and inclusion.

Pre-school children

Pre-school children are generally stronger and more coordinated and able to tackle more complex challenges. They are also becoming much more social and cooperative with their peers. They need opportunities to practise and develop their sharing and turn-taking skills by working on group projects or by playing simple board or card games together.

Other suggestions include the following:

- climbing and swinging equipment, ride on toys, tricycles, wagons
- space to run around and tumble
- things to throw, catch or kick – small bean bags, balls of assorted sizes, basketball rings, soccer goals
- things to manipulate, stack, construct – shape sorters, peg boards, threading equipment, sewing cards, stacking toys, blocks, interlocking blocks, train sets
- water play equipment and materials – boats, toy fish, measuring cups and pourers, things that float, things that sink
- gardening/nature equipment – flower and vegetable seeds, spades, trowels, bird feeder, worm farm
- cooking/food preparation equipment – spoons, mixing bowls, rolling pins, cutters
- science/maths equipment for sorting, matching, counting and measuring – magnets, magnifying glass, scales, etc.
- objects that can be investigated, sorted, classified, measured, ordered, matched – picture cards, plastic zoo/farm animals, plastic fruit/vegetables, natural items from the garden,
- card and board games, memory games – picture Lotto, dominoes
- creative/artistic equipment – crayons, paper, scissors, easels, paint brushes, glue, collage supplies, junk materials for 3D constructions/creations, dough or clay for modelling
- music/dance equipment – tapes, CDs, instruments (purchased or hand-made), ribbons, scarves
- dramatic and role-playing equipment – multi-ethnic dolls and accessories, play home and work furniture and other props, dress-ups, puppets, puppet theatre, unbreakable mirror
- things to make cubbies and special places – large boxes, fabric lengths
- language and communication equipment – books and storying telling equipment, music and stories on tape or CD, telephones, walkie talkies, cans and string, writing equipment
- books that talk about feelings, pillows, cushions, soft furnishings to create places to safely “let off steam” and places for quiet times, or time alone
- things that promote diversity and inclusion and support a sense of identity and belonging – photographs of enrolled children at home, photographs/posters of children and families showing diversity of ability, culture and family type.

Other equipment

As well as the items listed above to encourage children’s play and learning, other furniture items may also support the children’s program. It is important these items are child-friendly and safe for child care settings. Protect children from injury by ensuring furniture has no sharp edges and rough surfaces or that safety coverings are used.

- Tables and chairs for participating in craft activities – ensure heights match the children using these items
- Book shelves and storage/display units – ensure these are sturdy and stable and that children can easily access books and other play items. Rotate items to provide variety.
- Soft furnishings – ensure couches, cushions, mats, etc. are easy to clean and safe for children.

Useful resources

Organisations such as Kidsafe WA and the Department of Commerce can provide assistance and guidance to ensure that equipment used is safe for children.

Kidsafe WA

Telephone support and fact sheets.

t: (08) 9340 8509

w: www.kidsafewa.com.au

Department of Commerce

Product Safety Database is available to search and view the current information about unsafe products.

t: (08) 6364 3208

e: productsafety@commerce.wa.gov.au

w: www.commerce.wa.gov.au.

Further information

Child Care Licensing and Standards Unit, Department for Communities

t: (08) 6210 3333 or 1800 199 383 f: (08) 6210 3300 w: www.communities.wa.gov.au/childcare

1. Regulation 84(1), Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006
Regulation 68(1), Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006
2. Regulation 59(1), Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006
Regulation 46(1), Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006
3. Regulation 84(2), Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006
Regulation 68(2), Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006
4. Regulation 83(2)(d), Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006
Regulation 67(2)(d), Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006
5. Regulation 84(1)(d), Child Care Services (Child Care) Regulations 2006
Regulation 68(1)(d), Child Care Services (Family Day Care) Regulations 2006

This information sheet provides a simple interpretation of current legislation, and is not intended to constitute legal advice.