

creating places



for birth to threes

room layout and equipment

by **Community Playthings**, with assistance from
Jennie Lindon, child psychologist and author,
and **Ann Langston**, early years consultant



creating places

for birth to threes

room layout and equipment

Adults admire their environment; they can remember it and think about it – but a child absorbs it. The things he sees are not just remembered; they form part of his soul. He incarnates in himself all in the world about him that his eyes see and his ears hear.

Maria Montessori

Contents:	Importance of Environment.....	2
	Brief Overview of Development from Birth to Three.....	3
	Importance and Types of Play.....	6
	Room Organisation.....	8
	Activity Areas	
	Boundaries and Paths	
	Flexibility	
	Storage and Display	
	Furniture.....	9
	For Children	
	For Staff	
	Stimulation and Mood.....	11
	Chart of Age-Appropriate Equipment.....	12
	Quick Guide to Planning.....	14
	References.....	16
	Considerations for the Architect.....	17

Thank you to the children, parents and staff of

- Archway Early Years Centre, London
- Bridgwater College Early Years Centre, Somerset
- Childbase Nurseries
- Fortune Park Early Years Centre, London
- Gardens Children's Centre, Somerset
- Pembury House Centre For Childhood, London
- Pen Green Centre, Corby

Thanks for help and advice, to

- Clare Crowther of Bridgwater College Early Years Centre
- Sue Mizon of Newport Children's Partnership
- Mary Evans of Nursery World Magazine

Importance of Environment

Perceptive educators have always noted the impact of children's surroundings on their development. Friedrich Froebel (early 1800s) compared designing an environment for children to planning an organic and ever-changing garden, which can inspire and guide children's imagination and behaviour. A century later Margaret McMillan, pioneer of the British nursery school said, 'we are trying to create an environment where education will be almost inevitable.' The Reggio approach recognises the environment as a 'third teacher' (parents and carers being the first two).

Julia Manning-Morton writes that 'the physical environment in a setting impacts directly on the quality of practice, making environment a critically important component of an under-threes curriculum and one that practitioners need to plan for and review regularly...'

This booklet focuses on planning child-centred indoor areas, but outdoor space is indispensable. Most of the principles apply outside as well, and often equipment can be moved outdoors.

**We shape our
buildings, and
afterwards our
buildings shape us.**

Winston S. Churchill



ARCHWAY EARLY YEARS CENTRE



Brief Overview of Development from Birth to Three

The first months and years of a child's life are the most formative in development of mind, body, and spirit. Sleep, emotional and physical nourishment, and sensory stimulation are more important in babyhood than at any other time. The most vital need for these youngest children is the warm personal atmosphere created by a loving carer. Secondly, we must provide them with secure surroundings, and equipment and playthings that meet their needs and support their individual development.

Absorbing a host of impressions through his senses is almost the exclusive task of the infant... Often the whole life of a person is not sufficient to efface the impressions absorbed in childhood, simply because his whole being, like a large eye, was open to them, wholly given up to them. For this reason the care of the infant is so important.

Friedrich Froebel

The technological advancements of recent years have revealed the miraculous development of a baby's brain, confirming that the first years of life are the most critical in a child's development. Research reveals that colour, light, and the thermal and acoustical environment affect a child's ability to learn.

Babies and toddlers learn through all their senses. The sense of touch awakens as a baby's mother caresses, cuddles, and cares for her. As she gains control of her own movements, she reaches up to touch her mother's face while feeding. Babies

feel things with their feet as well. They need objects of various textures to explore. Tactile surfaces can be provided on walls and floors too – fleece, sandpaper and rubber for example.

A newborn's sense of sight is active. Within the first days and weeks, he begins to study his mother's face and look into her eyes. Pictures or contrasting patterns in a baby's cot can offer visual stimulation. Babies love to watch movement, and enjoy mobiles. Still better, if a cot or pram is placed beneath a tree, the baby can derive contentment from the interplay of light and moving leaves.

Classical music and birdsong are soothing for babies, and hearing a familiar human voice speak, croon, or sing is better still. Babies are not critical listeners, so you need not feel self-conscious – make up little songs as you care for them. It is exciting when babies discover their own voices and start making purposeful sounds. They also learn to make sound in other ways, by shaking and banging objects.

Young children discover through their sense of taste as they experiment with new foods or explore objects with their tongues and gums.



GARDENS CHILDRENS CENTRE



PEMBURY HOUSE CENTRE FOR CHILDHOOD



Margaret McMillan planted borders of roses, lavender, and herbs in her garden so children could experience pleasure through their sense of smell. We can follow her example today, even in inner-city locations.

Self-awareness begins from birth as the child increasingly perceives her surroundings and learns to differentiate between herself and other people and objects around her. What a remarkable concept this is! 'Young children strive for responses from others, which confirm, contribute to, or challenge their understanding of themselves.' (*Birth to Three Matters*, A Strong Child) Equipment with mirrors helps children become aware of who they are. Self-awareness comes to full flower in the two-year-old, who seems compelled to declare his independence at every opportunity (while simultaneously relying on close bonds with trusted adults). By the time a child is three, the concept of self is highly developed, typified by a child who stated while scrutinising a family photograph, 'I like me best!'

For young children, the boundary between reality and fantasy is a tenuous one, easily and frequently crossed. A child may play with her biscuits one moment, using them as miniature people; the next moment they become food again, eaten with enjoyment.

Motor coordination develops rapidly. Newborns occasionally flail their limbs involuntarily (which can frighten some babies, who may like to be snugly wrapped). They express happiness, sadness, or interest with the whole body. In time, a baby becomes able to lift his

head and consciously move his limbs. He gradually gains mastery of his body, working long and hard to get his toe into his mouth, for instance. Learning to roll from front to back, and back to front, are exciting milestones. It is important for babies to be on surfaces where they can move freely, eventually finding their own methods of inching forward to reach objects that attract them. Large cots with firm mattresses and see-through sides are ideal for young babies, and time on the floor in a protected area can begin around three months of age.

When babies learn to sit up, they view the world from a new perspective, observing much that was previously invisible to them. This is exciting but can also be frustrating, as an infant notices objects and activities that are out of reach. The treasure basket provides scope for exploration in spite of the child's lack of mobility

As babies learn to move and crawl, they have an urge to explore. According to Piaget, movement is the bedrock of all intellectual development. American child-care professional Anita Olds writes that 'often it is merely limited opportunities for movement that create many so-called behavioural and learning difficulties.' Times and places must be provided for active movement.

Prior to walking independently, children 'cruise,' grasping anything in reach for support. Make certain that furniture is stable, offers handholds, and has rounded edges. Playthings that allow practice in walking and balance are helpful, for example a pushcart, a sturdy chair, or even a strong cardboard carton to push.



'Physical care and loving attention are required in different ways as a child becomes mobile. Exploratory behaviour takes the child away as she crawls, walks, and inspects the world around her. The educator is required not only to protect the toddler through closeness, but also to let go, to encourage growing autonomy.' (Selleck & Griffin 1996 as referenced in the Birth-To-Three Framework) A child who has mastered the ability to walk is on the move. Provide equipment for climbing, pushing, pulling, rocking, riding – all involving large muscles. As they learn to walk, children get more involved with objects they can push than with things to pull.

Toddlers seem compelled to move quantities of items: to gather, dump, refill, transport, stack, and knock down. They love placing small objects into larger ones, putting pegs (or fingers) into holes, and fastening things. All these actions are important for cognitive development as well as fine-motor control. Everyday household utensils can occupy a child, as well as nesting toys, posting boxes, stacking cones, and pounding benches. Stacking is the forerunner of building, and even a ten-month-old may be seen placing one small wooden brick on another.

Toddlers are in what Piaget calls the sensorimotor period, because they learn through sensory input and motor activity. They need to move around easily and explore materials thoroughly. This means a simple room arrangement and a large gross motor area.

Every child is unique and develops at a different pace. Eberhard Arnold, writer and educator, affirmed in 1934, 'Each child is a thought in the mind of God. We must not try to mould a child according to our own ideas...' Carers need to observe and respect their children in order to provide what each one needs to develop in his or her individual way.



ARCHWAY EARLY YEARS CENTRE



GARDENS CHILDRENS CENTRE





Importance and Types of Play

Play has long been recognised as the key way in which children come to make sense of their often confusing world... Play provides a rich method for children to express what they know and, most significantly, how they feel about the world and their relationships.

Marjorie Ouvry

The presence of caring adults, ample space, and appropriate equipment offer children the opportunity to engage in spontaneous, creative play. Play is the child's means of discovery, communication, and expression. It is children's work and must be respected! Parents and carers need to realise that when children are playing, they are building a strong foundation for all future learning. There is a correlation between symbolic play (when children enact their world through role-play or using small figures) and the symbolism of writing they learn in later years. Many maths-related thoughts are absorbed while children play with bricks, just as water play is early physics. Apart from such justifications, 'it is a beautiful thing to see a child thoroughly absorbed in play... Play brings joy, contentment, and detachment from the troubles of the day. And especially nowadays, in our hectic time- and money-driven culture, the importance of these assets for every child cannot be emphasised enough.' (JC Arnold, 2000)

Since children are committed in their play, they may feel frustrated when

interrupted. If interruptions are necessary, consider preparing a child, for example, 'One more jump, then in we go!' Likewise, adults should refrain from constantly interjecting their thoughts into children's play.

Parallel play (each child engrossed in separate activity) is typical of babies and toddlers, but it leads naturally into shared co-operative play. Even young babies develop social games, beginning with noticing each other and exchanging looks and squeals, followed by deliberate interactions, like 'peek-a-boo.'

Because young children learn through all their senses, we must provide opportunities and materials in which they can involve themselves. Babies explore textures and objects with mouths and hands. Many nurseries have treasure baskets filled with everyday items of varying tactile qualities for babies to scrutinise, squeeze, bang, and mouth at their leisure. Practitioners choose the items, regularly check them for safety and cleanliness, and replenish baskets to maintain the babies' interest.

In their book, *People under Three*, Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson coined the term 'heuristic play'. Heuristic, according to the Oxford dictionary, means helping to find out or discover. 'Heuristic play is an activity we use with one-year-olds, two-year-olds, and young threes, giving them the opportunity to experiment spontaneously with a wide range of non-commercial objects. Children have a natural curiosity to investigate, so by providing items such as tins, corks, lids, ribbon, cardboard tubes, chains, and clothes pegs,

we are supporting this exploration. Whilst the heuristic play session is in process, adults remain seated and quiet. This supports children making their own choices and discoveries.' (Clare Crowther, trainer, Bridgwater College) Children of this age love to sort, arrange, and *do* things with objects – as compared to babies, who are content to ponder and explore things. So it is essential to provide large quantities of each item for heuristic play.

Nature is endlessly interesting to the toddler-explorer. Digging in earth, balancing on rocks, and rolling down grassy slopes are intrinsic to childhood. If practitioners must rely on indoor activity, they can take a lesson from the world of nature – through their choice of play equipment, they can offer similar opportunities to climb, balance, dig, and explore. They can also bring nature itself indoors: sand, leaves, pinecones, seashells, pebbles, plants, and living creatures.

Play at this time is not trivial; it is highly serious. Cultivate and foster it!

Friedrich Froebel

Wheeled toys are important, channelling the young child's need for continuous motion and total body involvement. Kiddie cars, pushcarts, big lorries, and any vehicles that move easily are in great demand in any under-threes setting. Wheeled toys must be the right size for children to straddle, and plentiful enough for several children to ride simultaneously. These vehicles can double as transporters, since children love hauling things.

Imitation play is the beginning of pretend. A baby copies an older child poking out a tongue. A one-year-old takes a bite from his slice of bread, notices its new shape, then 'walks' it across the table saying 'bow-wow!' Toddlers increasingly engage in imitation play. A block of wood can be a mobile phone – or a car. The simpler the plaything, the more versatile it is, allowing for open-ended play. (Open-ended means that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' approach.) Imitation/role play for babies and under-threes needs little or no equipment – a scrap of cloth is often sufficient to inspire a toddler's imagination.

Similarly, word play needs no equipment so is beyond the scope of this booklet. But young children love finger-games and songs, and excellent collections are available to supplement your own. Always remember that you, the carer, are the child's most valuable resource. Indeed one of the principles that underpins the *Birth to Three Matters Framework* is that 'Caring adults count more than resources and equipment.'



FORTUNE PARK EARLY YEARS CENTRE





Room Organisation

Margaret McMillan wrote, 'Most of the best opportunities for achievement lie in the domain of free play, with access to varied material.' A natural way to provide this is to divide your room into **Activity Areas**, from which children can choose. Some suggestions are

- Home corner
- Active play area
- Small world
- Construction/block play
- Malleable/sensory exploration
- Creative/art station
- Book/cosy corner

When deciding where to place your activity areas, first consider the natural flow of traffic based on location of doors, sinks, and toilets. Where will parents enter? Where will children have their personal space? Where is the exit to the outdoor play area? Then situate activity areas in a natural way to accommodate this flow.

The mealtime area, easels, and creative/messy play should be located near the sink. This area should have a non-slip, easily cleaned floor surface.

Choose the quietest part of your room for books, construction/block-play, and small world. These activities tend to take place on the floor, so use carpet (or better, area rugs for flexibility) to provide comfort and muffle sound. Floor cushions can transform an unattractive spot into a cosy nook.

It's important to provide places where children can simply 'be.' They instinctively recognise the most protected

corner in a room and find it reassuring to put their backs against something solid. Young children love small cave-like places, so cubbies and comfortable corners with low ceilings are favourites. Even a large cardboard box becomes a cosy house.

Babies and toddlers find it much harder than adults to select from the noises, smells and sights surrounding them and can become exhausted by constant sensory stimulation... We need to arrange the space so there are quiet areas, cosy corners... providing calm and security as well as busy activity.

Julia Manning-Morton

As time goes by, if any activity area is infrequently used, you can redevelop your space. Children give us cues if we watch and listen; creating constructive spaces is an ongoing process.

How well is each area defined? Far from being prohibitive, **boundaries** increase a child's security and focus. They need not be permanent and must not interfere with supervision. Sometimes a carpet or similar visual boundary can define space, but physical dividers should be used as well to establish activity areas and guide movement. They can be made of fabric, lattice, or furniture. The use of shelves as barriers is logical, serving the dual purpose of room division and storage. It is helpful if the barriers provide handholds for cruisers and toddlers.

If **paths** are well defined, children move easily from one activity to another. Take time to envision how paths will evolve. They should lead to destinations clearly visible from a child's viewpoint, detouring round activity areas. Ideally activity areas are bounded on three sides, since play is disrupted by through-traffic. If activity areas are arranged only along the walls, the large stretch of open floor may become a racetrack. Avoid this by placing an activity area with firm boundaries in the room's centre.

Keep your space versatile: choose movable room dividers and avoid built-in features.

Flexibility is key to accommodate

- Varying groups of children with different needs
- Extending learning patterns
- Changing themes
- Recapturing children's interest
- New staff with differing preferences

Storage needs to be considered early in the room layout process. Good storage is

- Safe
- Located close to point of use
- Clear and understandable to children
- Aesthetically pleasing

Make storage accessible to children. They gain a sense of accomplishment from helping pack up after playtime, so shelves or bins need to be within reach and clearly labelled with simple pictures. Most centres also designate some storage space out of the children's reach, for items used with adult direction.

Display is central to any childcare centre, conveying respect for each child's work. A shelf top at child height can

accommodate children's creations and exhibits. Shelves with pinboard backing provide surfaces for vertical display as well, saving precious wall space. These arrangements can be changed frequently to exhibit fresh artwork or photos of the creating process.

Furniture

Furniture should be child-sized and sturdy enough to withstand years of energetic use. Make sure that edges are rounded to avoid injuries. When choosing furniture, beware of the mindset that you need bright primary colours to 'stimulate' children. Plastic gives an artificial impression while wood is natural and friendly to the touch. Its varieties of pattern and colour offer opportunities for learning: 'Look, this was part of a tree!'



PEMBURY HOUSE CENTRE FOR CHILDHOOD



Chairs must be stable and allow children to have their feet on the floor so they feel comfortable and secure. This firm base strengthens control of their upper bodies. It is important that the table height corresponds; a 20-cm height difference from seat to table-top will accommodate most children well. Chairs with sides can give extra security to little people.

Height-adjustable tables are helpful in a setting with varying sizes of children. They can be altered for a child who is standing or sitting for a particular activity. They are also useful for after-school situations or for children with special needs. Some tables are kidney-shaped, allowing the carer to reach each child easily.

Meeting the needs of staff is important. We give higher quality care when we are comfortable. Maximise a caregiver's time and energy by providing

- Furniture arranged to allow supervision without excessive walking
- Materials stored conveniently
- Furniture easy to rearrange
- Equipment designed to avoid excessive lifting, e.g. nappy-changing units with steps or cots with drop sides. (Travel cots are sometimes chosen for ease of storage, but can be hard on backs of caregivers, as child has to be lifted from floor level)
- Seating for adults – gliders, settees, and rockers are perfect for bonding with babies. You also need chairs that are low, yet scaled to fit adults, so staff can interact at child level



Seat height (cm)	13	17	20	25	30
Table height (cm)	30	36	41	46	51
1 year olds	50%	50%			
2 year olds			60%	40%	
3 year olds				100%	
4 year olds				40%	60%
5 year olds					100%



Stimulation and Mood

Meaningful play flourishes when children are relaxed, so the mood in an early years setting should be home-like. Natural lighting, wood surfaces, wicker baskets, curtains and living plants can create a harmonious feel. The Reggio Emilia movement has delightfully demonstrated how light and reflection can be brought indoors; make full use of opportunities.

There should be a clear sense of order and aesthetic harmony within the environment as a whole.

Mark Dudek

Nature provides the best example of a soothing environment. Large expanses (sea, sky, plains) are varying shades of calm colours. Exciting colours like red or yellow come in smaller points. When setting up environments for children, bright colours can be provided in attractive splashes. Reggio research points out that 'a significant chromatic presence is provided by the children themselves... The environment thus should not be saturated with colour but should be slightly "bare" so that the best balance is reached when the space is inhabited.' (*Children, Spaces, Relations*, © Reggio Children and Municipality of Reggio Emilia - Infant-toddler Centres and Preschools)

Try to visualise the environment through a child's eyes. Get down on the floor and move around at child level. If you lie on your back and look up (a baby's perspective), you will realise that even ceilings are relevant!

Your reception area makes a statement of your ethos the moment people enter. Give careful thought to its design. Children (and parents) may feel intimidated if confronted by a large reception desk, so consider having the desk to one side. Provide childsize furniture and places for parents to sit down; welcoming places draw parents in, to stay and interact. Bear in mind that curves are friendlier than hard corners and right angles. Artwork and fabrics can articulate your appreciation for children's diverse backgrounds. A reception area is the 'good-bye' as well as the 'hello.' The way you set it up and the displays you create here can give children a sense of ownership. They know they have left happy traces on the environment, to which they will return (Jennie Lindon).

PEMBURY HOUSE CENTRE FOR CHILDHOOD



Chart of Age-Appropriate Equipment

Below is a chart of suggested basic equipment. Although children develop gradually and at different rates, this chart is divided into four broad stages for simplicity's sake. (Quotes are from *People under Three* by Elinor Goldschmied and Sonia Jackson.)

0 – 6 months

‘A baby room needs to combine a sense of spaciousness with intimacy, allowing free movement for mobile children and a quieter area for babies not yet able to move by themselves.’

Characteristics	Activity Areas	Suggested Equipment
Need much sleep	Sleep area	- Cots - Room dividers to screen sleep area
Need much physical care and contact		- Nappy-changing unit - Glider, rocking chair, or settee for care-giver, for feeding and bonding - Table for bottles and other items
Involved in sensory exploration	Takes place in all areas	- Treasure basket - Baby floor gym and mat - Ceiling can provide visual interest - Tactile materials on walls and floors
Start press-ups Start to roll	Baby-safe area on floor	- Floor mats - Room dividers

6 – 12 months

‘The general layout of the room for this age group needs to give maximum scope for the gross motor activity which occupies so much of the children’s energy as they progress from crawling and pulling themselves up to making first steps.’

Characteristics	Activity areas	Suggested Equipment
Continue to need much sleep	Sleep area	- Cots and/or rest mats - Room dividers to screen sleep area
Continue to need much physical care and contact		- Nappy-changing unit - Glider, rocking chair, or settee for care-giver - Table (adult height) for bottles and other items
Start to eat solid food	Mealtime area	- Chairs with trays and/or - Low table and chairs
Increasing sensory exploration	Sensory area	- Room dividers (clear panels are good to see through and finger-paint on; pinboard panels are good for attaching tactile materials) - Mirrors - Low table - Small chairs
Frustration with lack of mobility	Play area	- Treasure baskets containing variety of tactile objects - Shelves to store treasure baskets
	Book corner	- Book display units accessible to babies
Increasing mobility	Active play area	- Objects to push (cartons, sturdy chairs, pushcarts) - Nursery gym - Objects to crawl through and cruise around
Beginnings of role-play	Takes place in all areas	- Needs little or no equipment



12 – 24 months

‘Once a baby is mobile, he needs above all to be allowed to explore so that he can see the world in a new and different way.’

Characteristics	Activity Areas	Suggested Equipment
Physical care		- Nappy-changing unit with steps
	Quiet area	- Rest mats - Comfortable chair or settee for care-giver, for cuddling
	Mealtime area	- Table and small chairs - Trolley for food and dishes
Continuing sensory exploration	Creative play area	- Sand & water table - Low easels - Low tables and small chairs
	Heuristic play space	- Wide range of everyday objects collected by staff
Large muscle activity	Active play area, possibly on covered porch	- Nursery gym - Wheeled riding toys - Rocking equipment - Push carts
Learning to stack	Block corner	- Wooden and foam bricks - Shelves to store bricks
Increasing fine-motor coordination	Small world	- Little figures of people and animals - Small vehicles - Shelving to hold equipment and to establish the area
Advancing role play	Home corner	- Simple home corner furniture - Low table - Small chairs
Recognition of and interest in visual symbols	Book corner	- Book display units - Floor cushions
	Mark-making area	- Table and chairs

24 – 36 months

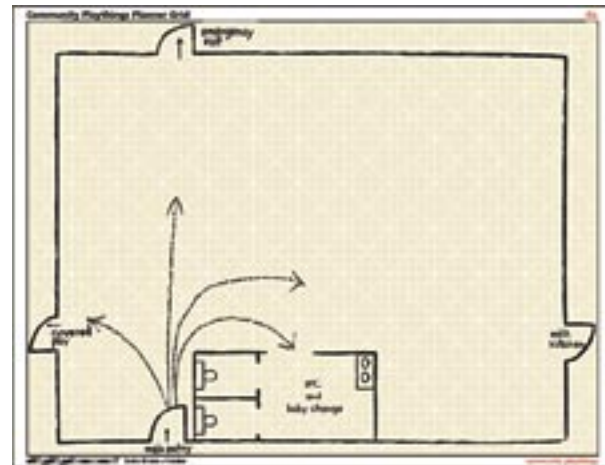
“An explosion of self-awareness” is one of the ways in which the experience of a child in the third year of life can be described.’

Characteristics	Activity Areas	Suggested Equipment
Physical care		- Nappy-changing unit with steps
	Quiet area	- Comfortable chair or settee for care-giver, for cuddling - Rest mats
	Mealtime area	- Tables and chairs - Trolley
Continuing sensory exploration	Creative play area	- Sand & water table - Easels - Tables - Chairs - Shelves to hold supplies
Large muscle activity	Active play area, possibly on covered porch	- Toddler town - Kiddie cars - Small tricycles - Small scooters - Pushcarts - Rocking equipment - Hollow blocks
Continuing to build	Block corner	- Wooden bricks - Shelves to store bricks
Increasing fine motor coordination	Small world	- Little figures of people and animals - Materials for creating houses, fences, etc - Small vehicles and car tracks - Shelving to hold equipment and delineate the area
Advancing role play	Home corner	- Loft - Home corner furniture - Table and chairs - Dress-up unit
Recognition of and interest in visual symbols	Book corner	- Book display units - Floor cushions
	Mark-making	- Table and chairs

Quick Guide to Planning

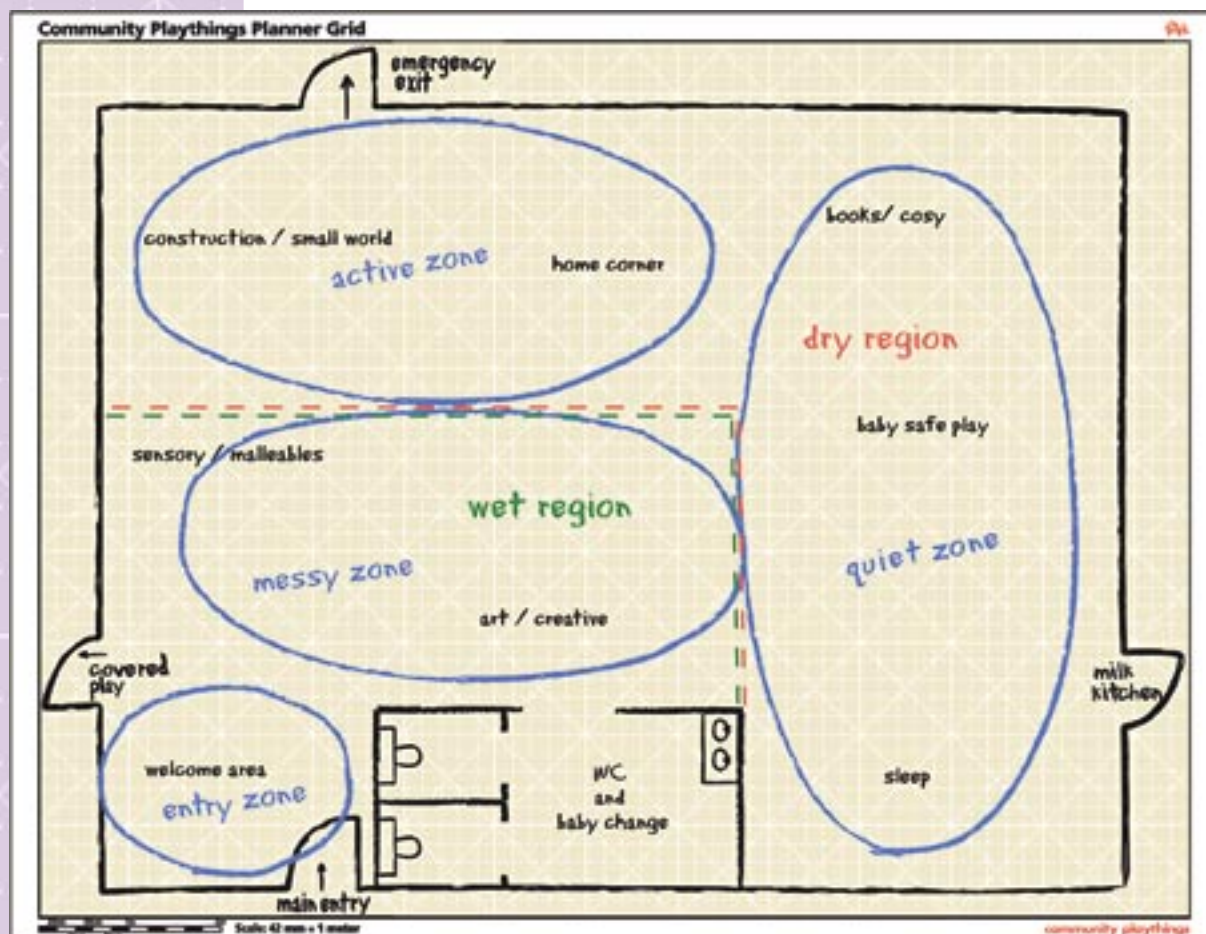
Here is a sample floor plan illustrating stages in room layout:

1. Make an overall room plan and mark in flow.

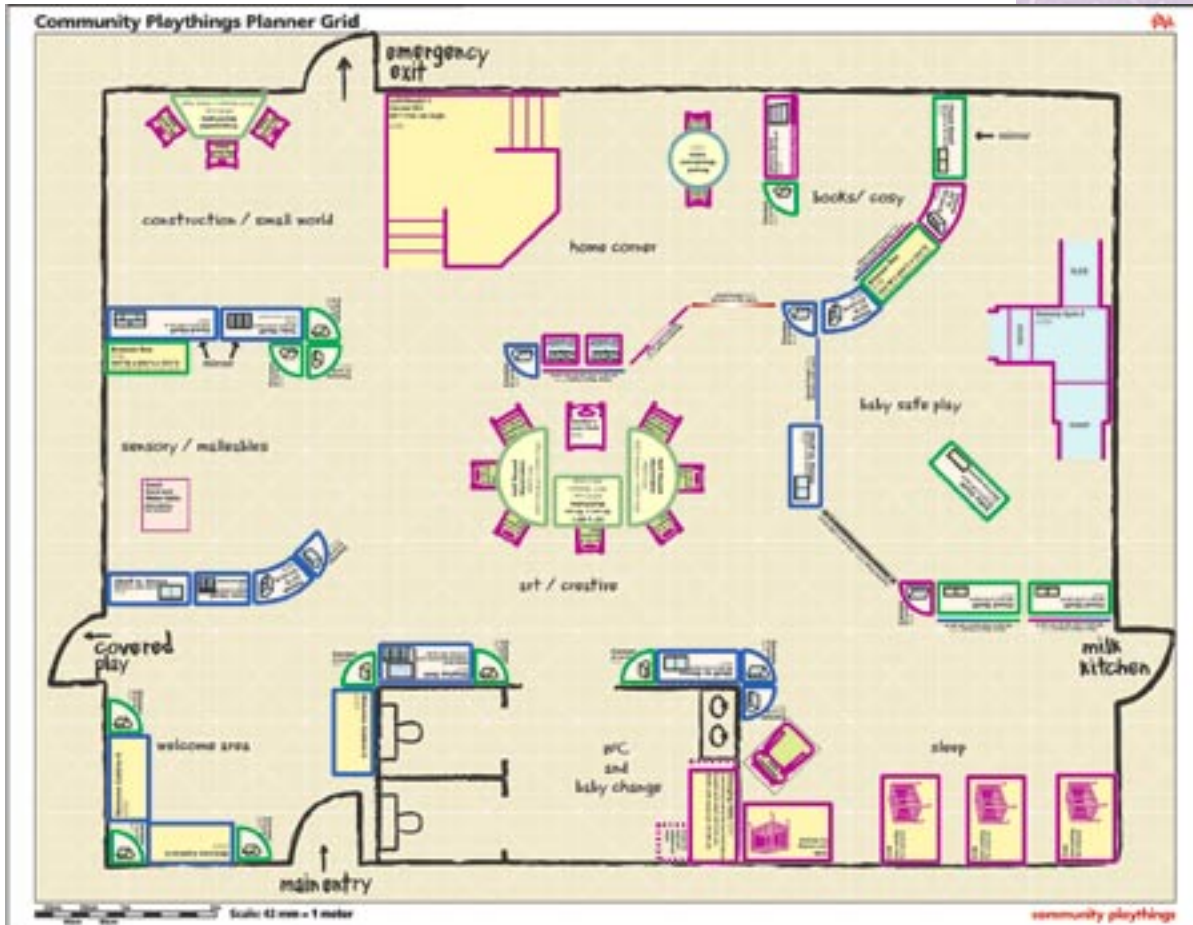


2. Divide room into wet and dry regions, and then divide into the following zones:

- Entry Zone
- Messy Zone
- Active Zone
- Quiet Zone



3. Create a space for each area.



References

- Arnold, E. (1976) *Children's Education in Community*, Plough Publishing
- Arnold, J.C. (2000) *Endangered: Your Child in a Hostile World*, Plough Publishing
- Bradburn, E. (1989) *Margaret McMillan, Portrait of a Pioneer*, London & New York: Routledge
- Ceppi, G. & Zini, M. (eds) (1998) *Children, Spaces, Relations*, Reggio Children - www.reggiochildren.it
- Community Products, LLC (2002) *Spaces – Room Layout for Early Childhood Education*
- Community Products, LLC (2003) *Children Come First, Selecting Equipment for Early Childhood Education*
- DfEE (1999) *Designing for 3 to 4-year-olds*, DfEE Publications
- DfES (2002) *Birth to Three Matters: a Framework to Support Children in their Earliest Years*
- DfES (2004) *Building for Sure Start: a Design Guide*, DfES Publications
- Dudek, M. (2001) *Building for Young Children*, National Early Years Network
Reprinted from book with permission from the National Children's Bureau. Copies available from the NCB on 0207 843 6029.
- Edwards, et al. (1993) *The Hundred Languages of Children – the Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*, New Jersey: Ablex
- Froebel, F. (1974) *The Education of Man*, Clifton New Jersey: A.M. Kelly reprint
- Goldschmied, E. & Jackson, S. (2004) *People under Three, Young Children in Day Care* (2nd edition), London: Routledge
- Manning-Morton, J. (2004) 'Birth to Three, Your Guide to Developing Quality Provision,' *Nursery World Magazine*
- National Children's Bureau (1987) *Infants at Work* video, London: NCB Enterprises Ltd
- Olds, A. (2000) *Child Care Design Guide*, McGraw-Hill
- Ouvry, M. (2000) *Exercising Muscles and Minds*, National Early Years Network
- Ryan, P. *Your Montessori Child*, London: Montessori International
- Selleck, D. & Griffin, S. (1996) 'Quality for the Under Threes' in G. Pugh (ed) *Contemporary Issues in the Early Years* (2nd ed) London: Paul Chapman/Sage
- www.savingchildhood.org

Community Playthings are manufactured by an educational community whose roots include Froebel's school at Keilhau and connections with Heinrich Pestalozzi. Children are an integral part of our communities. For over 80 years we have had our own childcare centres and schools, with members caring for the children. During and following World War II, orphan and refugee children were included. We are a fellowship of families and single people trying to live by the life and words of Jesus.

Since the 1950s, we have been designing and manufacturing play equipment and furniture, relying on input from early childhood professionals and drawing on our experience in communal childcare. Community Playthings now offers a **room-planning service**. We value the relationship with you who care for children; together we strive to provide environments that encourage young children's healthy development.

Considerations for the Architect

If you are involved during design stage, you may wish to discuss these points with your architect:

- A central common area, with rooms opening from it, is preferable to corridors
- Mobile storage is preferable to built-in storage
- Outdoor porch for large-motor activity in any weather and for babies' cots
- Direct access from playroom to outdoor play area
- Nappy-changing unit and toilet facilities easily accessible from indoor and outdoor play areas
- Doors: keep to a minimum, as they take space and generate traffic
- Windows: natural light is excellent, and children love to look out; but too much glass creates a harsh environment, takes valuable space, and makes us feel exposed
- Floor surfaces: consider safety (non-slip), ease of cleaning, sound absorption, and visual effect
- Ceiling surfaces: acoustic tiles absorb sound, whereas hard surfaces reflect sound
- Wall surfaces: consider material, colour, ease of cleaning and sound absorption
- Heating: in-floor heating is preferable to radiators
- Ample space in reception/welcome area so parents don't feel rushed
- Space for children's outdoor clothing and personal belongings
- Wood picture rail can be useful
- Storage space for pushchairs and car seats



Good architecture combines the practical with something less tangible; a sense of delight in the spaces which make up a building as a whole, which may even modify the moods of its users in a positive way. If designed skillfully, a building will help to make children's experience of their early year's care a secure yet varied one.

Mark Dudek



community playthings

Please ring for more information.

UK: 0800 387 457

www.CommunityPlaythings.co.uk

**Brightling Road,
Robertsbridge,
East Sussex,
TN32 5DR**

Window

Activity Centre

door

