

Environment for Babies

Catering for the baby up until they can walk on their feet all the time, around 15 months old (many babies take between 6-8 weeks after taking their first step to stay up on their feet all the time). Preparing their environment, looks at both the physical (space, furniture, materials) and human (relationships, emotional atmosphere) environment.

Physical environment

The entrance space for children to store their shoes/clothes, adults to leave shoes and personal things and for visitors sign in.

The learning space is different for the two developmental phases (0-6 months & 6-15 months).

An outdoor space to take in nature to practice movement over different textures. Including a small sand area with some toys in it and a basket of different balls that the babies can crawl up to and explore as they roll in different ways and speeds.



Indoor learning space includes areas to create order in the baby's life for sleeping, nappy changing, feeding/eating, and working.

Sleeping: 2 or 3 mats (placed in a clear space) that you can take out when a baby needs to sleep.

Nappy changing: a table (comfortable height for adults) with a change mat on top; a closed bin for soiled nappies / wet nappies; all items needed for nappy change, close at hand to ensure that physical contact and eye contact can be always maintained; access to water for adults to wash their hands after completing nappy change routine; cleaning fluids to wash down area ready for next baby, within easy reach but out of the reach of children; low drawers can be used to store clothes and nappies, to allow the child to see and to be part of the changing process; parents bring in spare clothes and nappies and place into cubbies/drawers with them; photos of each child could be placed on each drawer.

Feeding/eating: a comfortable chair for the adult to breastfeed or give bottles and a low communal dining table that will be used for all children, including chairs with arms for the babies as they need the support.

Working area (includes language activities): broken into developmental stages (1) newborn to crawling & (2) crawling to walking.

- (1) Newborn to crawling need: mat; full length, child approved, mirror (attached to wall); 1 shelf; selection of developmental mobiles; selection of rattles & toys



- (2) Crawling to walking need: a bar (attached to wall), heavy furniture (coffee table), access to stairs, tracker, selection of balls, rolling toys, activities to extend their gross motor development (wagons, bars to swing on, climb, slide, run)



The language environment includes labelling objects being used – label what you are about to do! Use clear, precise language, tune in to your child's cues and follow their lead, stop and gaze into the baby's eyes, as the baby grows communicate by getting down to the child's eye level, model the 'Dance of Communication', share action songs, lullabies, and poetry and read books to them.

The Human Environment

Educators/parents need to:

- Be emotionally available
- Slow down. The baby is learning! Allowing the baby time to work with and struggle with activity, i.e., the adult must be able to stand back.
- Be comfortable with crying and not let yourself be affected by a baby who cries. To understand that this is the baby's way to communicate.
- Be able to communicate with parents, respectfully. To share information in a way that allows parents to feel safe to ask questions. There should be no judgement.
- Be able to model clear, precise language when speaking to the babies and parents.
- Be present with the children and able to give full attention to the baby you are engaging with, regardless of what is going on elsewhere in the room. Ability to be truly present with the children is a skill we need to work on
- Be a good observer and willing to develop better observation skills. Babies cannot yet verbalise what is going on and how they feel. The adult must be always alert to this, seeking to find out more about each baby.
- Be able to model precise movements. Slow, deliberate movement. Awareness that you are being watched at all times.
- Be accepting. It is important that we respect each baby as a unique person. They will be different in the way they learn and respond to the world around them.
- Be comfortable with toileting. Toileting and sickness will occur. It must be dealt with respectfully.