



Child Care Management / Creating Learning Spaces

The Importance of Blocks



Dear Debi,

I have noticed that some of the girls in my care play in the block area more than they play with dolls. Is this OK?

– **Mechelle** , Granada Hills, CA

Debi's Tips



Debi Gutierrez

Host

- Problem solving
- Symbolic thinking
- Social interaction
- Math concepts
- Motor skills

Expert Advice



Greg Uba

Former Pre-K and Kindergarten teacher

Blocks provide children with the opportunity to exercise a variety of skills that will help them later in life. Blocks encourage social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills. They also encourage problem solving, symbolic thinking, and math concepts. Also, spatial skills, logical, mathematical skills, planning, construction and social dramatic play opportunities.

There are lots of different types of blocks. There are cubes, blocks for infants, and blocks that are suitable for outdoor play, table blocks, unit blocks, hollow blocks, tree blocks, soft blocks made of foam. Then there are “almost” blocks that are manipulatives like duplos and legos.

Blocks motivate creative thinking because of the planning that’s involved. They have to do lots of problem solving. They learn concepts of physics without saying it in such a scientific way. Depending on the types of blocks used, it involves patterns and nature. Given the opportunity to let it grow, you’ll see the creativity of what they’re building metamorphasize. As they’re allowed to bring other things into the area, like dolls and crayons, then the creativity takes on dramatic play, where they can have families and cars. It has a potential of becoming story telling.

The hardest thing is for parents to realize how important block building is. They don’t understand it because it’s noisy or seems dangerous. The best thing the parent can do is become part of the process. They should ask things like, “Tell me what you’re working

on?" And eliminate the "No's and the "That's too high." Adults can encourage this by encouraging block play and just sitting down and playing with the child.

Adding items such as little people and animal figures, cars or construction paper encourages children to extend their block play in lots of ways. We've taken blocks outside to the sandbox. We've had kids build dams. By incorporating block play outside, you all of a sudden have a jungle of animals and a zoo and a wildlife reserve. Or they'll even have dinosaurs. Children love block play.

Child Care provider Comments



Sandy

Family child care
provider for 5 years

In my home, the blocks are available at all times. The block area is one area I don't move around. Block play can be just like dress up. We may incorporate different items into the block play, such as cars, people, street signs, etc. There's a lot of role play involved. They are developing more than just math and spatial skills.



Clarissa August

Family child care
provider for 21 years

In my home we have a section that has different blocks in different sizes. We have smaller squares and circles that they can string together or snap together. We have the bigger ones for the younger kids and various sizes and shapes that the older kids use to build cities. I think it's important to have a conversation with them while they are building. I ask them why they chose that particular block, what they are building.



Elizabeth

Child care provider for 4
years

I use blocks with all the children I care for. I also encourage children to really feel the physical shape of the blocks. I believe the more you can incorporate all of a child's senses, the better a child will be able to understand the material or environment around him. Blocks are useful, because they show that every action has a consequence. For example, when a child stacks blocks up and then gives them a push, the child learns the blocks will fall down.

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