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# Description and Purpose of Learning Centres

- Learning centres are areas within the classroom where children can work independently within a small group, without the teacher's assistance.
- Each learning centre provides the children with a chance to develop decision making skills. They are given the opportunities to explore and make choices for themselves, developing a sense of responsibility for their own learning.
- In learning centres children are given the chance to interact within a rich environment, to learn through discovery.
- Each learning centre provides the children with opportunities to reinforce, consolidate and expand on specific skills and knowledge previously presented to the child.
- Learning centres are developed to allow the teacher to work with a group of children for a specific purpose while the rest of the grade is engaged in meaningful and worthwhile learning.
- Learning centres can provide a wide range of activities which cater for a variety of individual needs and abilities. Each child is able to move at his or her own pace. Individualisation should be stressed.
- Each learning centre has a specific focus and provides an opportunity for the children to explore activities relating to different areas of learning eg, writing, word study, reading, maths, etc.
- Learning centres contain familiar activities. That is, they are not new activities put out every day, but an established range that the children may then select from. They are not worksheets that require correction.
- The activities in each learning centre group may be teacher directed or child selected.
- Each learning centre caters for a maximum group of six to eight children.

# Setting Up Learning Centres

## Getting Started

- The initial focus is to get the children into the routine of working quietly and independently on an activity. They must understand that they are not to interrupt the teaching group for any reason.
- In order to establish a learning centre you need to reorganise your classroom to create a working space for the children and a storage space for the materials and activities. For more information on classroom arrangement, refer to page 6.
- The children need to be put into groups, the groups named and displayed for the children's easy reference. The group name is also displayed as an icon on the activity board. Depending on the teaching focus, these groups could be based on ability, needs, social or be a random grouping. These groups should be flexible, with the children being able to move from one group to another as the need arises.
- Gradually introduce the learning centres, one centre at a time. Introduce activities, one at a time, explaining or modelling each one, before including it in the learning centre.
- Children need to practice being able to independently access the centre, select appropriate materials and return the materials upon completion of the session.
- To facilitate the rotation between the teaching group and the learning centre group, a management system needs to be established. This is achieved through the use of an activity board which uses icons as a visual cue to the children. These icons represent each centre or the teaching group the children will access for that session. For more information on the use of the activity board refer to page 15.
- After three or four activities have been established in the first centre, you may feel ready to introduce a second learning centre.
- Continue to incorporate activities into your existing centres, which reflect current learnings.
- Develop new centres as you become more confident, then, as required.
- Each additional learning centre would focus on a different area of learning. For suggested learning centres, refer to page 9.

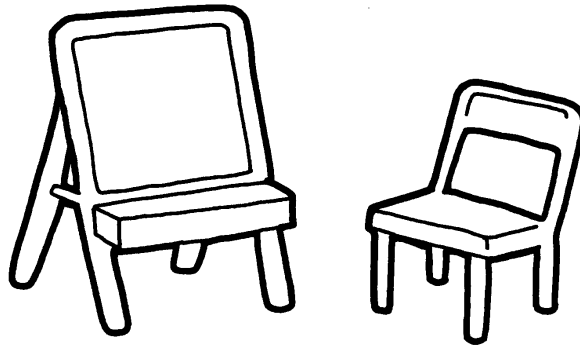
# Classroom Arrangement

Your room needs to be organised into learning centres which consist of working spaces for the children and storage spaces for materials and activities.

Working spaces are areas where the children will be completing their activities.

## These could be a:

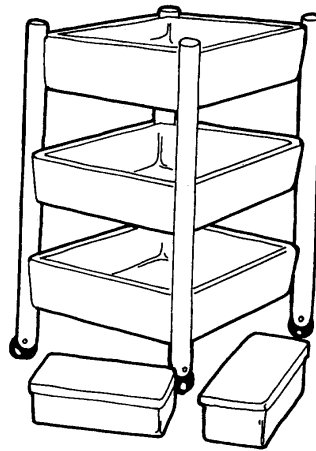
- cluster of tables and chairs
- desks
- cushions/mattress
- mat
- easel
- sofa
- cleared area
- wet area



Storage spaces are areas within each centre where the children have access to materials and activities relevant to that centre.

## These could be a:

- trolley
- table
- bookshelf
- racks
- shoe pockets
- pigeon holes
- cupboard



All activities and materials in each centre need to have a specific storage area, within easy reach, so that the children can collect and return them.

Store activities and materials in separate, labelled containers.

# Writing Centre Activities

## Instructions and Blackline Masters

### Letter Writing

#### Purpose:

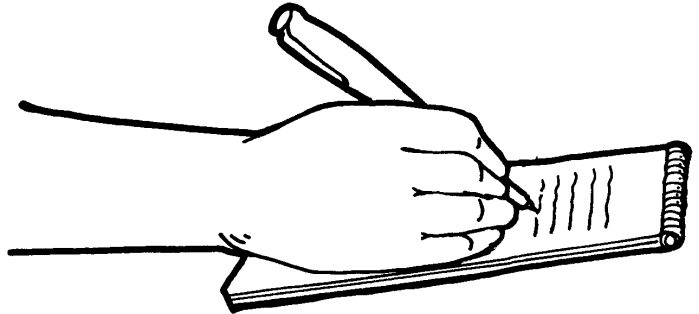
- To practice the procedure for letter writing

#### Construction:

- Make multiple copies of the black line master (pages 20 and 21)

#### Additional equipment:

- Envelopes
- Classroom postbox



#### Instructions:

- Write a letter and draw a picture if appropriate
- Place in envelope and address
- Post letter in postbox for delivery

#### Variations:

- Beginning letter writing—write a short sentence and illustrate it to convey the meaning
- Proficient letter writing

