

Toddlers on the Move!

Active toddlers are busy discovering how their bodies move and do interesting things — clapping hands, stomping feet, rolling a ball down a hill, pushing a riding toy, and more! Be sure there is plenty of space for these experiences both in and out of the classroom.

Learning Guide: Environmental Arrangements for the Toddler Class

- To encourage active **indoor** play, consider whether your classroom space allows toddlers to crawl, walk, climb, dance, and push/pull or roll toys. Are there open areas for active play? Does the flooring provide a good play surface? Are furniture or other materials in the way? Add a step stool and allow toddlers to climb up to the changing table during the diapering routine.
- During **outdoor** playtime, do you see toddlers walking, running, climbing, throwing balls, pushing, or using riding toys? Is there ample space for each child to engage in such activities? If not, what can you change or modify the space?
- Toddlers enjoy pushing and pulling toys such as a wagon, tricycle, or an empty box. Take a look around the playground. Is the playground surface paved, or adapted in a way to make it easier for a child to engage in physical activities?
- Toddlers enjoy learning about the things they can do with their bodies. It's important to provide a variety of play materials that will encourage physical activities. Some of these are wagons and wheelbarrows for lifting and pulling; small and large balls for throwing, rolling, and kicking; boxes to pick up, climb, stack, and knock down; and riding toys for cruising. A large cardboard appliance box can provide endless opportunities for children to climb in and out, using their bodies to move and groove.
- Consider new ways young children can use outdoor equipment. A tricycle might support a child in the activities of pushing and pulling before he is actually able to ride it. A swing with a safety harness might be an appropriate outdoor activity for a child who has limited physical abilities.
- During the next week of play time, write down the things you see each child doing. Is each child able to reach and use play materials and equipment independently? If not, what can you do in order for the child to access the materials? Could a child using a wheelchair freely move around the playground and get to different classroom learning centers? Would a child with visual impairment recognize there is a space designated for individual learning centers and toys?

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

You'll know the practice is working if ...

- All children in your classroom are moving in a variety of ways much of the time
- Children ask to play movement activities by using gestures, signs, or words
- Children are engaging in familiar movements and acquiring new movement skills

A Quick Peek

When Brady first began attending a childcare program as a young toddler, he cried a lot and did not interact with other children. Brady's mother explained that he had a walker at home that he used for moving around the house,



and that he preferred it to crawling. His mother didn't think there was enough space for it in the classroom. His teacher spent some time moving a few shelves and tables and asked Brady's mother if she could bring the walker to school to try it out. Moving just a few things opened a path Brady could follow with his walker to move independently throughout the room. Brady's teacher reports that Brady is now exploring each learning center in the classroom using his walker to access each space. While he is exploring learning centers, he is also interacting with peers.

For more ideas about arranging things so all young children in your class can participate, ask teaching colleagues, therapists, and early interventionists, [Click here for a wealth of ideas about adaptations from the Tots-n-Tech resource helpdesk.](#)