Selecting Materials

Whether you are purchasing new materials or deciding which materials to rotate into learning and play areas, you should consider how you make these decisions. Below are several points to consider when selecting materials:

1. Select materials that promote learning and are of interest to the infant or toddler. Materials should:
   - Stimulate child to respond
   - Encourage social interactions and play
   - Engage more than one of the senses
   - Be durable
   - Promote open-ended discoveries

2. Include materials that support the development of infants and toddlers and are:
   - Challenging but not frustrating
   - Appealing to full range of developmental skills and interests

3. Provide duplicates (same color, size, function) of the same item to:
   - Help reduce conflict
   - Minimize the need for sharing; older toddlers can begin being introduced to turn taking
   - Support parallel play

4. Choose materials that honor infants’ and toddlers’ families. Materials should:
   - Be representative of infants and toddlers in the program and their families
   - Be inclusive of infants and toddlers with disabilities and special needs
   - Vary; books, puzzles, photos, dolls, pretend food and cookware, posters, music props and art supplies should portray the diversity of the program and community

5. Select items used in homes (e.g., kitchen spatulas, strainers, wooden spoons, plastic bowls) to:
   - Provide open-ended play
   - Help create a home-like environment
   - Support families in learning new ways to use items from home to support development and learning
6. Offer materials that include a variety of:

- Textures: smooth, bumpy, squishy, rough, soft, woods, metals, plastics, fabrics
- Fine-motor skills: grasping, turning, poking, shaking, pushing, pulling, putting together, taking apart, using a pincer grasp
- Gross-motor skills: climbing, balancing, pulling, pushing, steering
- Colors
- Size
- Shapes
- Sounds
- Action: action–reaction (cause and effect) materials

7. Rotate materials when:

- Infants or toddlers appear to have lost interest
- They do not meet a child’s developmental needs (too easy or too hard)
- They have been used for some time—rotate materials periodically unless children are still interested and actively using them