



# CIRCLE

## INFANT & TODDLER CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Observer \_\_\_\_\_

School Year \_\_\_\_\_

BOY Observation Date \_\_\_\_\_

MOY Observation Date \_\_\_\_\_

EOY Observation Date \_\_\_\_\_



# How to Use the Infant & Toddler Classroom Environment Checklist

The Infant & Toddler Classroom Environment Checklist (I-T CEC) is a 22-item observation tool used to document the presence and quality of important aspects of the infant or toddler classroom environment. Most of the items in this tool apply to both infant- and toddler-aged classrooms in center-based and home-based child care settings. Items that are for infants only or toddlers only are noted. For the purpose of this measure, infants are 0-12 months of age and toddlers are 13-35 months of age. If a classroom includes both infants and toddlers, rate all infant and toddler items.

## Tips for Conducting Observations

This tool is designed to focus on the learning environment, not on the teacher's interactions with children. Thus, an observation can take place with or without children in the room and typically takes 15 to 30 minutes to complete. In addition, this checklist focuses on aspects of the environment that relate directly to children's opportunities for play and learning, rather than basic health, safety, and sanitation (which are addressed in each state's minimum standards for child care centers).

The observer needs to be able to view all parts of the classroom, as well as the environment that children use for outdoor play time. Ideally, the observer will see and walk around the classroom and outdoor space in person. If this is not possible, it is permissible to complete the checklist based on video footage or photos that enable the observer to view all required areas. When instructing teachers on filming their classrooms, make sure they pull out bins from shelves and show individual items (like puzzles or books) so that all items are visible.

## Understanding the Rating Scale

The I-T CEC uses a 3-point rating scale for each item: 1 - low, 2 - moderate, and 3 - high. Each item rating has a description, and most items include specific materials and examples. When toys and materials are mentioned, it is assumed that they are developmentally appropriate for the ages of children in the classroom. If materials are present that are not developmentally appropriate, do not include them when scoring the relevant checklist item. When the term "accessible" is used in an item, this means toys and other play materials are displayed at the children's level (low-level shelves, baskets of materials on the floor, etc.) and organized to facilitate children's independent access and choice.

The observer will mark the rating that best matches what they see. The observer may examine materials in the classroom as needed to inform their ratings. For example, they may need to pick up and look at the books in the classroom to rate certain items. For items with an asterisk (\*) indicated, it is also permissible to ask the teacher questions regarding specific aspects of the learning environment that might not be in view and to ask to be shown such items. For example, the teacher may have sensory bins for older infants that are only brought out at certain times and under close supervision. The teacher might have a mat and toys for infants that are taken outside during outdoor time, so the observer might need to briefly interview the teacher about what other outdoor areas they may use in addition to the playground. Examples of appropriate questions to elicit such information include:

- "Do you take the children outside for outdoor playtime?" If yes, ask follow-up questions: "Where do they have their outdoor time?" and "Can you show me materials you bring out for them that are not out/visible right now?"
- "Are there sensory play materials that you use with the infants?" If yes, ask, "Can you show me those materials?"
- When observing a multi-age classroom (infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and/or school-age) in a home-based setting, ask the teacher, "What age children use this material/toy?" This will help you to determine whether to include that toy or material when scoring the relevant checklist item.

However, keep in mind that the checklist is not designed to be based on interview responses to most items. Unless otherwise noted, the observer should rate based on what is visibly present in the classroom or outdoor area.

## Goal-Setting with the CEC

The I-T CEC may be used as part of an ongoing coaching program where feedback is provided to the teacher after an initial observation rating, and subsequent observations and ratings serve to document the teacher's progress in creating an optimal learning environment. There are columns to record observations made at the beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of the year (EOY). After each observation, it is recommended that the observer discuss the results with the teacher and work with the teacher to set goals to increase the rating score for the next observation.

## INFANT & TODDLER CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT CHECKLIST

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
<b>ARRANGEMENT OF INDOOR SPACE AND ORGANIZATION</b>				
<b>Basic Classroom Arrangement</b>	1 Classroom is disorganized, messy, and/or it has cluttered spaces. It lacks defined spaces for different activities or a designated area on the floor to play.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 Classroom is not cluttered and enables free movement, but it lacks defined spaces for different activities or a designated area on the floor to play.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 Classroom is organized with clearly defined areas for variable groupings, including small, quiet spaces and larger spaces for group activities. Traffic patterns permit smooth movement for children and adults of all abilities (e.g., sufficient space for a wheelchair).	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>Lesson Plans</b>	1 Lesson plans are absent or do not relate to curriculum, theme/unit, or learning objectives.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 Lesson plans are based on a curriculum or theme/unit, but they do not include learning objectives.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 Lesson plans based on a curriculum and/or theme/unit are evident. Lesson plans include intentional activities linked to learning objectives within the daily schedule.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS FOR COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT</b>				
<b>*Toys/Materials that Promote Sensory Exploration</b>	1 There are minimal materials that promote sensory exploration.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some materials that promote sensory exploration, but there are no "messy" activities.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple materials that promote sensory exploration, including at least one "messy" activity.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: multi-textured toys, toys with visual patterns, child-safe mirror, sensory bottles, bubble wrap, water or sand/rice table or tub, play dough, paint, glue sticks, collage materials, etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
Toys/Materials that Promote Learning about Math	1 There are minimal accessible materials or books that encourage awareness of numbers, quantity, counting, or measurement.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some accessible materials or books that encourage awareness of numbers, quantity, counting, shapes, or measurement.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of accessible materials or books that encourage awareness of numbers, quantity, counting, shapes, or measurement.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Examples: toys with shapes and/or numbers on them, number or shape puzzles, counting books, counting blocks, measuring cups, etc.			
Notes/Evidence:				
Toys/Materials that Promote Problem Solving	1 There are minimal accessible toys/materials that promote problem solving.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some accessible toys/materials that promote problem solving, and/or those available may not be in good condition (e.g., missing pieces).	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of accessible toys/materials that promote problem solving, and they are in good condition (e.g., no missing pieces) and are sufficient for the number of children in the class.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Examples: infant activity center/mat, nesting or sequencing toys, busy cube with various sides, puzzles, sorting activities, cause-and-effect toys like pop-up boxes, shape sorters, blocks, connecting blocks, linking toys, ball drop toys, magnetic toys, etc.			
Notes/Evidence:				
Toys/Materials that Promote Learning about Science (Toddlers Only)	1 There are minimal accessible materials in the classroom for science exploration.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some accessible materials in the classroom for science exploration.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of accessible materials in the classroom for science exploration.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Examples: colored viewers; magnifying lenses; binoculars; flashlights; magnets; toy insects or reptiles; a simple body parts puzzle; nonfiction books about science/nature topics; sensory table (e.g., water, rice, corn, beans) with toys for scooping, pouring, measuring, using funnels, etc.			
Notes/Evidence:				

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
Natural Materials	1 There are minimal natural objects for children to interact with in the classroom and/or the outdoor environment. All materials and play equipment are manufactured.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some natural objects for children to interact with in the classroom and/or the outdoor environment (e.g., logs, tree stumps, mulch) but not living plants or trees.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of natural objects for children to interact with in the classroom and/or the outdoor environment.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: real plants/flowers; real animals/fish tank; worm jar; rocks; shells; pinecones; sensory table filled with natural materials (leaves, twigs, dirt, etc.); bug collection supplies; outdoor environment with grass, mulch, trees, bushes, logs/tree stumps, flowers, pine cones, a garden and gardening tools, or sandbox; etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				
Toys/Materials to Promote Pretend Play (Toddlers Only)	1 There are limited accessible materials that promote pretend play.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some types of accessible materials that promote pretend play, but they are limited and/or may be in poor condition.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of accessible materials in good condition that promote pretend play. A designated dramatic play area may be organized as a home environment or as a theme-related environment (doctor's office, grocery store).	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: puppets, dolls, toy animals, toy food and dishes, toy vehicles, pretend doctor kits, dress up clothes and hats, etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				
Visual Daily Schedule (Toddlers Only)	1 There is no visual daily schedule located at children's level to allow for children to see activities and daily routines. There may be a daily schedule for adults' use only.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There is a visual daily schedule located at children's level, but it only has words (no pictures/icons).	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There is a visual daily schedule located at children's level that includes words with pictures/icons for each activity in order. There may also be evidence that children/teacher move an arrow or otherwise indicate which activity is occurring.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Evidence:				

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
<b>Thematic Connections (Toddlers Only)</b>	1 There is no evidence of a theme/unit.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There is limited evidence of a theme/unit in classroom materials, books, and decor.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There is ample evidence of a theme/unit in classroom materials, books, and decor. If more than one theme is present, consider the dominant or higher quality theme in rating.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS FOR LANGUAGE &amp; LITERACY DEVELOPMENT</b>				
<b>Children's Books</b>	1 There are minimal accessible age-appropriate books, and/or most books are in poor condition.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some accessible age-appropriate books, and most are in good condition.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple accessible age-appropriate books in good condition. If the classroom has dual language/bilingual instruction, books must be available in both languages.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: board books with simple text and appealing pictures; cloth books; touch-and-feel books; simple stories or rhymes; teacher-made books; books with real photos; counting books; simple books about feelings, families, and cultural celebrations; non-fiction books about science and nature topics; etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>Toys/Materials to Promote Exploration of Sound, Speech, and Listening</b>	1 There are minimal accessible toys/materials to promote exploration of sound, speech, and listening.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some accessible toys/materials to promote exploration of sound, speech, and listening, but not enough for more than one child to participate at once.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of accessible toys/materials to promote exploration of sound, speech, and listening.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: rattles, drums, musical instruments, toy telephones, musical toys, toys that make animal sounds, busy box with sound elements, etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
Meaningful Print (Toddlers Only)	1 There are minimal examples of meaningful print in the classroom and/or print is used only for adult communication (e.g., notice board for parents) and is not at children's eye level.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some examples of meaningful print at children's eye level in the classroom. Some print is paired with pictures or objects.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple examples of meaningful print paired with pictures or objects at children's eye level in the classroom. Children's names must be included. If the classroom has dual language/bilingual instruction, print must be available in both languages.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: children's names, nursery rhymes, labels for toy containers or shelves, visual schedules and home-school chart, food packages for pretend play, hand-washing chart, farm animal poster, feeling faces poster, child's dictation describing their artwork, children's family photos that are labeled, etc. Note: Count multiple sets of printed alphabet letters as one example.				
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS FOR SOCIAL &amp; EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>				
Child/Family Photos	1 There are no photos of children and their families visible in the classroom.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are photos of children and/or their families visible at children's level in one place in the classroom.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are photos of children visible at children's level in one or more places in the classroom, and there are photos of their families visible at children's level in one or more places in the classroom.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: child/family photos on the wall, or in homemade or class-made books, etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				
Representations of Diversity	1 There are minimal representations of diversity in the classroom.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are representations of some types of diversity across classroom materials.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple representations of types of diversity across classroom materials.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: toys, dolls, photos, posters, books, songs, nursery rhymes, pictures of family celebrations (foods, customs, traditions), etc. that accurately represent diverse ethnicities, cultures, abilities, family structures, and gender roles without reinforcing stereotypes. Note: Examples include (but are not limited to) the cultures of the families in the classroom.				
Notes/Evidence:				

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
<b>Materials to Promote Emotional Awareness</b>	1 There are minimal materials that promote emotional awareness.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some materials that promote emotional awareness.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of materials that promote emotional awareness.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Examples: mirrors at children's eye level; posters, photos, or books about feelings/emotions; etc.			
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>Classroom Features to Promote Self-Regulation</b>	1 There are minimal classroom features to promote children's self-regulation.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some classroom features to promote children's self-regulation.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of classroom features to promote children's self-regulation	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Examples: lights that can be dimmed or softened; quiet cozy area (with pillows or soft furniture); rocking chair or rocking toy; teeth-ing toys; washable stuffed animals/soft cloth dolls; wall displays/materials organized to avoid visual overstimulation; individual rugs or marked spots to sit on during group activities for two-year-olds; books or visuals about safe behaviors (e.g., addressing hitting/biting, being gentle); etc.			
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>Children's Artwork (Toddlers Only)</b>	1 There are minimal displays of children's artwork in the classroom or hallway directly outside the classroom, and/or lack of evidence to show child choice/creativity (e.g., displayed artwork all look the same, coloring pages).	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some displays of children's artwork in the classroom or hallway directly outside the classroom. Children's artwork shows child choice/creativity, but these tend to be at adults' eye level.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple displays of children's artwork at children's eye level in the classroom or hallway directly outside the classroom. Children's artwork shows child choice/creativity (e.g., displayed artwork does not all look the same).	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Evidence:				



Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORT FOR MOTOR DEVELOPMENT</b>				
Materials to Promote Fine Motor Play	1 There are minimal accessible materials to promote fine motor play.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some accessible materials to promote fine motor play, but there is limited variety or sets are incomplete/pieces missing.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple accessible materials to promote fine motor play, and they are complete enough to be used fully.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: rattles, teething rings, busy gears, large pop beads, peg boards, large beads and strings, squeeze toys, stacking tower, connecting blocks, shape sorters, play dough, toddler matching games, drawing and painting implements, etc. Note: Do not credit books as fine motor materials.				
Notes/Evidence:				
Materials to Promote Gross Motor Play	1 There are minimal types of gross motor materials accessible to children in the classroom, and there may be inadequate space for children to move freely and safely around the room.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some types of gross motor materials accessible to children and designated areas in the classroom where these activities are encouraged. There is also adequate space for children to move freely and safely around the room.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of gross motor materials accessible to children and designated areas where these activities are encouraged. There is adequate space for children to move freely and safely around the room.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: c-shaped pillow; exersaucer; several balls; things to ride, climb, throw, push and pull; foam wedge to climb on available for toddlers to access throughout the day; tunnels; slides; boxes/baskets to crawl in/out of; etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				
<b>OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT</b>				
*Outdoor Play Arrangement for Infants	1 There is minimal equipment/materials appropriate for outdoor infant activities.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some types of equipment/materials appropriate for outdoor infant activities.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of equipment/materials appropriate for outdoor infant activities.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Examples: mats, blankets, or areas safe for tummy time; age-appropriate apparatus for crawling and climbing; strollers or buggy for walks; bringing infant toys outdoors (don't have to be outdoors all the time); extending a lesson or activity outside; etc.				
Notes/Evidence:				

Item	Rating Description	Observed		
		BOY	MOY	EOY
<b>*Outdoor Play Arrangement for Toddlers</b>	1 There is minimal equipment/materials appropriate for outdoor toddler activities.	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
	2 There are some types of equipment/materials appropriate for outdoor toddler activities.	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	3 There are multiple types of equipment/materials appropriate for outdoor toddler activities.	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
	Examples: safe and appealing areas or structures to crawl, climb, and/or slide on; balls; wagons; push/pull toys; riding toys; chalk; sandbox, buckets, and shovels; extending a lesson or center activity outside; etc.			
Notes/Evidence:				

Asterisk (\*) indicates the items for which it is permissible to ask the teacher questions regarding specific aspects of the learning environment that might not be in view. Please see the instructions for more information.