

Unlocking Children's Access to Materials

Accessible means that, during the observation, children can **see**, **reach**, and **use** the required toy, furnishing, material, or equipment.



Accessibility of materials *differs by age*. For example, non-mobile infants need teachers to bring materials to them, while older school-agers may be able to access a closed toy cabinet on their own.

Examples of Common Barriers:

Please note these are only examples, and this list is not inclusive of all possible barriers to access.

Verbal

- Teachers tell children the dramatic play area is “closed” today, prohibiting access to the required dramatic play materials.
- A child reaches for an open bin of crayons on a low shelf, but the teacher tells them “Those are for our art activity later...” and redirects the child to another area, resulting in a lack of access to art materials.

Physical

- In an ITERS classroom, there are many bins of toys on low shelves with clasp lids on them. Children are observed to be unable to open the bins, and teachers offer no help.
- The sand table has a lid on throughout free play, prohibiting children from accessing sand play.
- In a SACERS observation, music materials are observed to be stored in a closed filing cabinet. Although labeled, the younger children in the group do not understand that they are able to access those materials.

Assigned centers

- In an ECERS classroom, children are assigned specific centers during free play and are not allowed to leave, resulting in no child having reasonable access to all required materials.
- Children are allowed to choose their own center during free play but are not allowed to leave their chosen center, resulting in no child having reasonable access to all required materials.

Other

- In an ECERS classroom during free play, children are called over to complete a small group activity. Although they are allowed to return to free play afterwards, the activity is required, which does not allow for reasonable access to free play materials during that time.
- During a SACERS observation, all the girls are taken to use the restroom during free play, and it is stated that this will be their only chance to go before outdoor play, resulting in the children being compelled to engage in another activity.

A Note on SACERS:

Accessibility is determined by several factors: **Location** of the materials and the **type of storage** provision; materials within the play areas are **easy to reach** for children in the group; children's age and knowledge that the materials are **intended for their use**.

Please note: This resource was created in early 2025 based on the current ERSI guidelines. Resources will be updated as promptly as possible if guidance changes, but observation scores are always based on what is observed and the most recently-published sources.