



# Developmentally Appropriate Practice Checkup

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## Developmentally Appropriate Practice

1. Meet the children where they are (which means you must know them well) and help them to reach goals that are both challenging and achievable.
2. All teaching practices should be appropriate to the child's age and level of development, unique needs, and social and cultural contexts in which they live.
3. Does not mean making things easier for children. Rather, it means ensuring that goals and experiences are suited to their learning and development AND challenging enough to promote their progress and interest.
4. *Best practices* are based on knowledge—not assumptions—of how children learn and develop. The research base yields major principles about curriculum and teaching effectiveness and forms a solid basis for decision making in early childhood education.

## Challenging and Achievable Goals

1. Build on what a child already knows and is able to do. The child must stretch a reasonable amount to gain new skills, abilities, or knowledge.
2. When a child reaches a milestone or goal, the teacher reflects on what goals should come next and continues the cycle.
3. Learning does not happen by chance. Teachers must be intentional about everything they do—setting up the classroom, planning the curriculum, selecting teaching approaches, assessing children, interacting with them, and working with their families.

## Classroom Schedules and Routines

1. When a classroom is beset with behavior problems, it is often the schedule that needs managing, not the children.
2. Be consistent yet flexible. Think of the schedule as a sequence of activities with highly flexible start and stop times. The order is more important for consistency than the exact amount of time spent.
3. Consider overlapping time frames. For example, one child might need a few extra minutes to finish a free choice art activity while other children wash up for snack. Quick eaters could clean up and go outside with one teacher while slower children linger and chat with a second teacher. This flexibility makes transitions smoother and avoids the abruptness that can upset young children.
4. Alternate large and small group/noisy and quiet.
5. Allow larger blocks of time for more engaged play. If the children aren't engaged, maybe they are being asked to accomplish too much, or the task hasn't captured their interest. Is it the content of the activity or the length of the activity that needs adjusting?
6. Allow adequate time for transitions but try to limit whole group transitions when possible. Send one or two children to wash hands, use restroom etc.
7. Ensure that schedules and routines are based on children's needs rather than adults'.
8. If it isn't working *out*, change it *up*.

## Fine Motor Skill Development

You can help children to build fine motor skills in many developmentally appropriate ways. Don't spend time doing worksheets or coloring pages. Try these fun task.

### **DAP Fine Motor Activities**

- Molding or rolling play dough into balls between both hands.
- Rolling play dough into tiny ball with fingertips.



- Tearing newspaper into strips then crumpling them into balls.
- Scrunching up a single sheet of newspaper in one hand.
- Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, cereal, macaroni, etc.
- Turning cards, coins, checkers, or buttons without bringing them to the edge of the table.
- Making pictures using stickers or self-sticking paper reinforcements.
- Poking large pins into the back of a carpet square.

#### **Scissor Activities**

- Cutting up junk mail.
- Cutting straws or shredded paper (making confetti).
- Making fringe on the edge of a piece of paper.
- Cutting out pictures from a toy catalog or newspaper ad from a toy store.
- Cutting alphabet letters out of a magazine and creating an anonymous letter to a friend.



#### Tips for Successful Circle Time

1. Set up an area for circle time so that children face away from an open door, ongoing preparations for another activity, or any other distractions. Use cushions, tape outlines, or patterned rugs to designate personal space.
2. How the children sit at circle time is important, too. Discourage W sitting with knees turned in and feet out to the sides. Criss-cross apple sauce may hurt some children's knees or backs. Encourage children to sit comfortably but politely so that others may see and hear. Maybe even include a back row of chairs to allow all children to see.
3. Keep your circle times short. Most toddlers have a maximum attention span of five to 10 minutes and most three- to five-year-olds can only attend for up to 15 minutes. Plan to do several circles times throughout the day rather than one or two LONG ones.
4. Involve everyone, but do not force children to participate in circle time. Being "actively involved" to some children is watching, listening, and sensing. Encourage shy children to join in when they are comfortable and ready. If a child is disruptive, ask him to sit in a nearby chair and watch circle time as part of the "audience." Encourage the child to return when he is ready to join in and cooperate. Acknowledge and reinforce appropriate behavior. Tell the children what good listeners they are, how well they can control their bodies, what great inside voices they have, etc.
5. Don't waste children's time waiting for them to be quiet and still before being individually excused from circle time. Just get 'em moved on to their next activity. "Before you go, show me the number of sides on a triangle." "If you're wearing the color blue, you may choose a center."

#### DAP Activities

- The teacher has the responsibility for planning DAP tasks that are engaging, challenging, and within the zone of proximal development.
- Tasks should be hands-on, minds-on! Worksheets are not examples of DAP tasks for preschool. Recording sheets for investigations are DAP though. Children can learn the conventions of writing within the context of play.
- Don't be intimidated by messes, a bit of productive noise, trying something new, or asking for feedback from parents/children.
- Use the Texas PreK Guidelines to ensure there are no gaps in students' understanding. Pinterest is nice, but many of the activities are crafts. Be choosy!
- Many DAP tasks for preschool do NOT have a product. Therefore, you may have to help parents understand that children's backpacks may be empty but learning is still going on. Dr. Jean poem!

# What's in Your Backpack

## by Dr. Jean

What's in your backpack?  
It's empty today.  
Where's your work?  
Did you just play?

When I built with blocks  
I learned about shapes.  
I balanced and shared –  
Our skyscraper was great.

I played in the windy house  
And talked with my friends.  
I rocked a baby  
And played pretend

In science I observed,  
Guessed, and experimented, too.  
The same things grown up  
Scientists do.

Art was messy.  
I created and explored.  
I solved my own problem  
When I spilled glue on the floor.

My fingers got a work out  
With puzzles and clay.  
Those same muscles  
Will help me write one day.

I counted and sorted and  
And measured, too.  
I used my brain  
Like a math whiz would do!

Out on the playground  
I ran like the wind.  
I learned to take turns  
And helped a hurt friend.

Story time is what  
I always like best.  
I can use my imagination  
And give my body a rest.

I sang and danced -  
Learned a finger play, too.  
I answered questions  
and said, "Please" and "Thank you."

There will be time  
for worksheets and tests,  
But talking and playing  
Is how I learn best.

I love to go to school.  
I'm glad I'm me.  
An empty backpack  
Means I'm learning, you see!