

Environment Rating Scales Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Where can I find the playground safety standards that are used to assess my playground?**

The Consumer Product Safety Commission handbook can be found at www.cpsc.gov

2. **Does everything that is labeled with "Keep out of the reach of children" have to be locked away?**

Yes. Anything containing a label requiring it to be kept out of the reach of children must be locked away. Being placed on a high shelf, inaccessible to the children, isn't sufficient for the purpose of the ERS.

3. **Does bleach water solution have to be locked away?**

No. As long as the bleach water solution is mixed appropriately, it does not have to be locked away, but must be placed on a high shelf, or otherwise located so that is inaccessible to the children (children are unable to touch or grab solution).

4. **What is the appropriate mixture for bleach water solution?**

For the **Sanitizing** solution, use 1 tablespoon of bleach for 1 gallon of water. For the **Disinfecting** solution, use 1-3 tablespoons of bleach to 1 quart of water or ½ to ¾ cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water.

5. **When do I need to sanitize the sinks?**

If you use the same sink to wash hands after toileting/diapering and before and after meals and snacks, you must sanitize the sink after each child washes their hands to discourage cross contamination.

6. **What does accessible mean?**

Accessible is defined as children being able to reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings and/or equipment without barriers. (A barrier is, for example, a high shelf blocking toys/materials, or a teacher telling a child they cannot play with a certain toy/material.)

7. **Can Hand Sanitizer be used with the children?**

Hand sanitizer can be used for adults and children 2 years of age and older when hands are not visibly dirty. (For children under 24 months, the original hand washing is still required.) Hand Sanitizer must be locked away when not in use due to the warning label **Keep out of reach of children**. Hand sanitizers must contain 60-95% alcohol, the manufacturer's instructions must be followed and children must be closely supervised when using.

8. **Can I use a disinfecting solution other than bleach water?**

Any type of EPA approved disinfecting solution is acceptable to use on diaper changing tables and bathroom sinks/toilets as long as you follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. Pay close attention to the amount of time the solution is required to be in contact with the surface before being able to be wiped away. Does one need to wear eye goggles and gloves while using the solution? If so, they must be utilized appropriately.

9. **Can I use shaving cream with my children as a sensory experience?**

Shaving creams warns on the label to "keep out of the reach of children". Shaving cream is not an acceptable substance for sensory play.

10. Where can I find the ERS notes for clarification?

<http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/> - click on the scale you are interested in (ITERS, ECERS, FCCERS) and then click on additional notes.

11. Why do I need a hands-free trash can?

Having a hands-free trash can allows the staff to dispose of waste (diapers, tissues, etc.) without having to contaminate the trash can with his/her soiled hands. Diapers are required to be disposed of in a covered trash can. A hands-free trash can will allow staff to throw away a soiled diaper without having to use their hands to open the lid.

12. What is the proper sanitation procedure?

In order to properly sanitize a surface, one must first use a soapy water solution to remove dirt. Following the soapy water, one must use a solution such as bleach/water to sanitize, or remove germs from, the surface. If a sink is used for multiple purposes (after toileting and before meals) the sink (faucets and bowl) must be sprayed using the above mentioned procedure. The sanitizing solution should be allowed to remain on the surface for 2 minutes before being wiped off, or allowed to air dry. The same practice can be used for eating surfaces as well as diaper changing surfaces. **Beginning 7/1/11-sanitation solution must remain on the surface for 2 minutes.*

13. How can I store naptime mats and linens if I do not have a lot of space?

Mats that can be folded can be placed in large storage bags as long as the bags can be stored in a locked cabinet. Pieces of cardboard that have been laminated to make them non-porous can be used to separate stacked mats.

14. Can I use plastic bags in my classroom?

Any type of plastic bag is considered a choking and suffocation hazard and should not be used in the classroom. This includes grocery bags, ziploc type storage bags, etc. Plastic bags must be stored in a locked cabinet or must be kept out of the classroom.

15. Are infants/toddlers allowed to watch TV?

It is developmentally inappropriate for young children considering that young children learn mostly through interactions and hands-on experiences. Based on this fact, children under the age of 24 months should not be allowed to watch TV. **Beginning 7/11/11, facilities that use any TV with children under the age of 24 months will score a "1" on the item "Use of TV, video, and/or computer" on the ITERS scale*

16. Can I swaddle or use blankets with infants (under 12 months) in my care?

Swaddling of children in child care settings is associated with the risk of serious health conditions and is not permissible. Based on the new policy statement in *Caring for Our Children* (American Academy of Pediatrics, et al.) on SIDS sleep-related infant deaths, blankets are hazardous for sleeping infants under a year of age. In order for sleep provisions to be considered safe for infants, no blankets or any other soft materials such as (toys, bumper pads) should be placed in the crib.