The Early Childhood ACADEMY
Quality and affordable early childhood training

Developmentally Appropriate Block Play

Age Range	Types of Blocks and Materials that They Need	What They do with Blocks	What is Learned
Age 1-2	• Lots of blocks in different shapes that they can grasp • Soft vinyl-covered foam blocks that won't hurt when mouthed and can be washed after use • Thin plastic or empty cereal-type boxes that can be knocked down • Large, soft foam blocks for toddlers • Medium-sized wood blocks in a variety of shapes and colors for toddlers	• Manipulate/feel blocks with hands • Put blocks in mouth • Reach for blocks • Drop blocks repeatedly, especially if in a high chair • Knock down a stack of blocks • Older infants (approximately 8-12 months) will look for a hidden block • Toddlers love to stack big foam blocks as high as they can and knock them down	• Physical properties of objects • Eye-hand coordination • Lessons of gravity • Cause and effect • Object permanence
Age 3-4	• Lots of different types of blocks: a good set of wood unit blocks including arches, pillars, ramps, and curves; large hollow blocks; small color cubes; interlocking blocks such as bristle blocks or snap blocks • Props such as play animals, people, vehicles, trees to embellish pretend play	• Match, group, and classify blocks by size, shape, and color • Build tall stacks of blocks • Build structures and roads • Will start building without a design in mind, then label it afterward • Make patterns with blocks • Begin to use blocks in pretend play scenarios	• Beginning math concepts such as matching, grouping, classification • Problem solving • Fine motor and gross motor control • Visual-spatial relations • Balance and gravity • The power of their imagination • Confidence in their ability to create
Age 5-6	• Many different types of blocks and materials, including miniature multicultural people, vehicles, mechanical items (pulleys, drawbridges, inclines) • Wagons, buckets, platforms • Large hollow blocks • Lots of space and time for building	• Build elaborate structures; cities, roadways, castles, houses, etc. • Think about and plan what they intend to build • Use blocks to represent real-life places and things • Build structures specifically for their pretend play scenarios • Tell stories about their structures • Build cooperatively with others • Match, group, classify, and arrange blocks in patterns	• Logico-mathematical concepts including classification, seriation, number, and spatial relations • How to express ideas using symbols or pretend objects • Communication skills • Planning, follow-through, cause and effect