

Planning Sequential Activities

Benefits of Engaging in Sequential Activities

Early childhood classrooms offer the opportunity to take advantage of children's natural curiosity through play and creative exploration. Research shows that children also need opportunities to interact with materials and engage in activities that require them to think, plan, and reflect. Sequential activities provide important opportunities to **practice executive function** and **self-regulation skills**.

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Children who spend **more time engaged in Sequential activities** make greater gains in:

Letter & Sight Word Recognition

Early Math Skills

Emergent Writing Skills



Dimensions of Executive Function

WORKING MEMORY

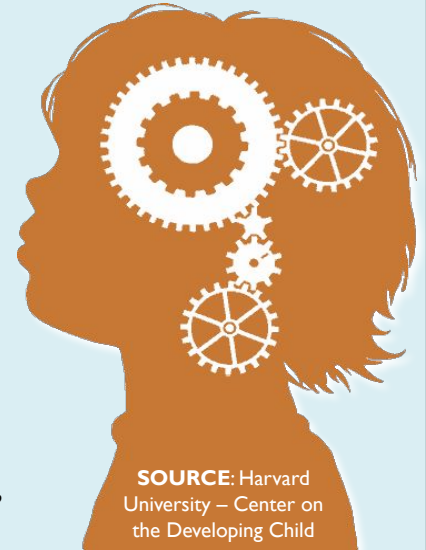
The ability to hold information in one's mind and use it.

INHIBITORY CONTROL

The ability to master thoughts and impulses so as to resist temptations, distractions, and habits, and to pause and think before acting.

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY

The capacity to switch gears and adjust to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives.



Supporting Sequential Activities: Things to Remember

When setting up the classroom and choosing materials, teachers should strive to **create opportunities** for higher levels of cognition throughout the day.

Suggest scenarios or shared goals to **structure play**

Extending curricular themes or topics of study into a variety of activities allows children to further explore and make connections. For example, if the class is studying buildings, have children take on different roles of a construction crew (e.g., architect, electrician, carpenter). Keep in mind that children may need help understanding what these roles involve.

Preview and **model** how to use materials in a sequential way

Children may need guidance or suggestions for engaging with more open-ended materials in a sequenced, thoughtful way.

Incorporate **self-correcting** materials

Puzzles are a perfect example of self-correcting materials. Children get immediate feedback about their progress by gauging how well the pieces fit together *and* whether the images on adjacent pieces make sense.

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Facilitating Sequential Activities During Centers

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Non-Sequential:

Harry randomly and quickly flips through the pages of a book before sighing and saying “I can’t read.”



Sequential:

Joel “reads” a book, carefully turning pages and making comments and using the pictures to follow the story.

Library Corner

Use self-talk to model strategies for reading a book even when you don’t know all the words.

Non-Sequential: Sara and Gemma are knocking down “towers” in the block center, making dinosaur noises



Sequential: Charlie and Summer carefully stack blocks to match a photo of the Batman building.

Help children make plans or blueprints for buildings.
Provide pictures or diagrams in the block center to help give children ideas.

Block

Think about how writing can be incorporated into every study or center. Suggest that children write letters, make lists, or author stories.

Non-Sequential:

Maddie scribbles with markers at the “writing table”



Writing

Sequential: Keyon writes a prescription for a sick puppy at the “Vet Clinic” (Dramatic Play)

Non-Sequential: Children scatter pieces from different puzzles on the floor



Sequential: Children work on a puzzle together or alone—looking for pieces, rotating pieces to fit

Teach strategies for putting together difficult puzzles.

Toys & Games