

## Additional Notes for Clarification for the ITERS-R

*These notes do not change any of the requirements in the printed scales, they merely add additional information to help in accurate scoring.*

Be sure to replace older notes with newer notes.

Most recent changes are in blue:

08-09: Much of the Day      01-11: Item 5  
06-10: Item 14, 17, 18, 24      03-11: Items 2 and 17  
09-10: Much of the Day      07-11: Handwashing, Item 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17, 19, 23  
11-10: Item 19      01-12: Item 8  
12-10: Item 3, 15, 23      04-12: General Notes, Item 5, 7, 8, 9, 11

07-12: Bleach/water ratio, Item 9  
09-12: Item 8  
11-12: Bleach/water surface time  
01-13: General Notes (addition to handwashing note)  
06-13: General Notes (bleach solution)

09-13: Much of the Day, Item 9 and 10  
11-16: Item 23  
**03-22: Item 23**

### General Notes:

In order to clarify the different but related functions of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to remove germs, "Caring for Our Children" states that cleaning means physically removing dirt and contamination using soap, water and applying friction, thus exposing any remaining germs on the dry, clean surface. Sanitizing means reducing germs on an inanimate surface or object to a safe level. Disinfecting means destroying germs on an inanimate surface or object. A sanitizer should be used on food contact surfaces or any object that is mouthed. A disinfectant should be used only on diaper changing tables, toilets, counter tops, door and cabinet handles. Only EPA approved products are acceptable, and all sanitizers and disinfectants must be used according to the instructions on the container in order to be safe.

Caring for our Children has issued a new recommendation for use of a diluted bleach solution for sanitizing and disinfecting because many brand name companies have changed their bleach solution and there is no longer a consistent solution across different brands. The new recommendation advises us to: use only EPA registered products for sanitizing and disinfecting; follow the manufacturer's instructions for diluting the bleach solution and for the required contact time.

### Explanation of Terms Used Throughout the Scale:

**Much of the day:** In most items, "much of the day" is associated with the children's access to materials typically used indoors (e.g., books, art materials, fine motor or dramatic play toys). It means most of the time that any child maybe awake and able to play. If children are prevented from using materials for long periods by overly long routines when the children have to wait with nothing to do, being kept in groups that they are not engaged in, or being kept in areas where access is not possible, then credit cannot be given for "much of the day." Appropriate group activities in which children are engaged and interested for short periods that match their abilities are permissible as long as they do not significantly affect access to materials throughout the rest of the day. If children (or any child) who are ready to play are prevented from reaching and using materials for a total of 20 minutes during a 3-hour observation, then "much of the day" cannot be given credit. The 20 minutes can be calculated as one 20-minute time period, or may be calculated as a combination of smaller time periods that equal 20 minutes. "Much of the day" should be considered separately for each item where the requirement appears. In some cases credit might be given on one item for much of the day, while not given for another item.

When timing for "much of the day", begin timing when any child has no access to play materials when awake and ready to play. If the time the child does not have access is less than 3 minutes, do not count this in calculating the 20 minute limit. A wait of less than 3 minutes is acceptable. If the time with no access lasts for 3 or more minutes, use the whole time in calculating the 20 minutes time limit. Do not omit the first three minutes of the time without access.

Since it is beneficial for babies less than 12 months to be held, even without access to play materials, do not count time being held as long as the child receives regular interaction from the adult (talked to, shown things, patted) unless the child obviously does not want to be held.

If children are kept outdoors for *extremely long periods* (1/3 of the day or more), thus limiting access to materials typically used indoors, then to give credit for "much of the day", such materials must be provided outdoors as well. Special attention should be paid to individual children who may not have the same access to materials as do the other children. For example, non-mobile children or children who are confined in a playpen may not have the same access to play materials as the other children in a group. For non-mobile infants, all required toys or materials do not have to be accessible at the same time during the whole observation because of problems with clutter. However, there must be clear indications that the required variety and numbers of materials are accessible at various times during the day. A cranky baby who needs close physical contact to be soothed may not be "ready to play" and thus not require access to materials during the "cranky" times.

When children are taken for stroller rides, do not count the time spent riding as part of the 20 minutes when children do not have access to materials for "much of the day" as long as children are generally engaged (one child may be less engaged than others for some part of the ride, but most children should show interest, and no child should show distress), and the actual stroller ride is no longer than 20 minutes. Some children may fall asleep in the stroller, but in this case they are not awake and ready to play, so falling asleep should not count in the timing for much of the day. Sometimes there are delays in putting children into strollers, and after the walk, removing them. If children have to wait for long periods (over 3 minutes with no access to play materials) while waiting in the strollers, then the time waiting should be counted towards the 20 minute limit that will disallow crediting "much of the day."

If the stroller ride is more than 20 minutes, do not give credit for "much of the day" in the Active Physical Play item, indicator 3.1, since children are not able to freely move around when confined in a stroller. If most of the children are not engaged during most of the stroller ride, consider when calculating "much of the day" in item 26, Peer Interaction.

This note should be added to the "Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale" that begins on page 7 in the ITERS-R scale:

**Handwashing:** The 2011 edition of *Caring for Our Children* (page 113) states that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing unless hands are visibly soiled. Use can be by adults and children 2 years of age and older. (For children under 24 months, the original hand washing is still required.) Therefore the use of hand sanitizers is acceptable when scoring these indicators as long as the product contains 60-95% alcohol, manufacturer's instructions are followed, and very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and to avoid ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. Be sure to check to be sure that the manufacturer's directions for use are followed exactly, because if not, do not give credit for any time when not followed. You should ask to see the original container with directions for use, if it is not observable. If children are not closely supervised when using the sanitizer, consider in supervision-related indicators for the item specifically, and also in Safety and Supervision.

If hands are visibly dirty, handwashing, according to the required procedure is still required, although the time for rubbing soapy hands together before rinsing is changed to 20 seconds rather than the original 10 seconds. Antibacterial soaps should not be used. Children using shared art or sensory materials must wash hands, or use hand sanitizer according to directions, both before and after use.

Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

The use of some shared art and sensory materials will not require hand washing before use. Moist or wet materials are more likely to spread germs than dry materials. For example, shared crayons would not require hand hygiene before or after use, while having two children share play dough, or finger paint on one surface, would require it. Similarly, hand hygiene would not be required before using shared dry sand (just after), but if water were shared, then hand hygiene would be required both before and after use.

2. Furniture for routine care and play	3.1	When determining whether furniture for routine care is sufficient, consider the sizes of cubbies in relation to what is stored in them to see if they can adequately accommodate all of each child's possessions. Each child enrolled in the group must have an individual cubby that is not shared with anyone else, with space for all possessions to be stored there. This is to reduce the spread of lice and scabies. When children's personal belongings, such as coats, extra clothing, blankets (if stored in cubbies,) are not reasonably well-separated, or if cubbies are so full that things fall onto the floor, score 3.1 "No" because the cubbies are not adequate in size based on what must be stored in them. If there is only minor touching of possessions (e.g., protruding sleeves of winter coats touching those of other children, or a small problem with other materials, but this could be solved easily by pushing things into the cubby properly, consider the cubbies adequate. Any touching of children's personal possessions should also be considered in the Health item.
3. Provision for relaxation and comfort	3.2, 5.3	When counting the numbers of soft toys, individual pieces belonging to a soft toy that has various pieces, such as a soft stacking ring toy, can only count as one example, even though the individual parts might be what a child uses.
5. Display for children	5.1	Labels on shelves indicating where materials are to be stored and center labels or signs do not count as display.  Since the intent of this indicator is to expose children to varying, identifiable images, and for these images to be present throughout the room for adults to point out and talk about to encourage children's language development, children's artwork (credited in 3.1 and 7.4) is not considered here.
7. Meals/snacks	1.3, 3.3, 5.3	Since three important health practices are required (eating surface washing /sanitizing, hand hygiene before and after eating, and serving uncontaminated foods), consider the extent to which each of the required health practices is followed. If there is little effort in 2 of the 3 health practices, (for example, handwashing is completely ignored, there is no attempt to clean tables, and/or foods are served under conditions that cause extreme contamination), then score 1.3 Yes. There can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds, but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If there is a significant attempt to complete all practices, even if some procedures are not done absolutely correctly, score 3.3, Yes. If there is a minimal attempt to do all procedures, but the practices are completed with many serious errors, score 3.3 No.  See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the "Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale".
	1.3, 3.3, 5.3	An alternative EPA approved "sanitizer" may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution as part of the table washing procedure or for high chair trays, and other food related surfaces. Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA sanitizer. Be sure all instructions for use are followed such as the time required to be on the surface or whether to rinse after use. If not do not give credit for cleaning the surface. Safety issues regarding the use of the alternative sanitizer, such as not rinsing the residue if required or not keeping out of the reach of children, should be considered in the supervision-related indicators of this item if applicable, and in the Safety item where applicable.

8. Nap	Since cribs with sides that drop down are no longer considered safe for children, consider this issue in both the Nap item and the Safety item.
1.1	According to the 2011 edition of <i>Caring for Our Children</i> (page 99) swaddling of children in child care settings is associated with the risk of serious health conditions, and is not necessary or recommended. Therefore consider the use of swaddling in this indicator.
1.1, 3.2	Based on the new policy statement in <i>Caring for Our Children</i> (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.  <i>Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition</i> now requires 3 feet between cots, mats or cribs. Solid screens or other barriers, such as crib ends or toy shelves, are not acceptable because they would need to extend from floor to ceiling to prevent air borne contamination from one child to another, and would disrupt supervision. For 1.1, score No if at least 75% of the cribs/mats/cots are separated by 3 feet, and no cribs are closer than 24 inches. For 3.2, do not give credit unless there is 3 feet between each sleeping surface.
9. Diapering/ toileting	In the most recent <i>Caring for Our Children</i> , 3rd edition, pages 106-108, there are changes to the diapering procedure to use when scoring. First, non-absorbent paper is required that extends from the child's shoulders to beyond the feet. The diapering surface must be disinfected, but does not have to be washed first, as long as the paper is used and the surface is not visibly soiled. If paper is not used, then the surface must be cleaned (a wipe is permitted for this) and then disinfected, whether visibly soiled or not to be counted as correct when scoring. Second, a soiled diaper should be left under the child, while the child is cleaned. Then it should be folded over and disposed of properly. For the complete current diapering procedure, see <i>Caring for Our Children</i> , or look for the new handout on <a href="http://www.ersi.info">www.ersi.info</a> .  For information on changing children in "Pull-ups" or other disposable underwear, or with soiled clothing, see the 2011 edition of <i>Caring for Our Children</i> , pages 108-109.
1.3, 3.3	See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the "Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale".  There can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds, but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles, not turning off faucets with a paper towel). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If handwashing is usually ignored completely, score 1.3 Yes. If attempts to complete handwashing usually occur when needed, even if incomplete, score 1.3 No and 3.3 No. If there is a significant attempt to complete handwashing as required, even if some procedures are not done absolutely correctly, score 1.3 No and 3.3, Yes.
1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1	An alternative EPA approved "disinfectant" (not sanitizer) may be used in place of the usual bleach and water solution. Check the label of the original container and look for the designation as an EPA disinfectant. Be sure all instructions for use are followed. If not do not give credit for disinfecting the surface. Safety issues regarding the use of the alternative disinfectant , such as not rinsing the residue if required or not keeping out of the reach of children, should be considered in the supervision-related indicators of this item if applicable, and in the Safety item where applicable.
10. Health practices	1.1, 3.2, 5.2  1.1, 3.2 See the note on handwashing/use of hand sanitizers that has been added to the "Explanation of Terms Used throughout the Scale".  There can be minor lapses in following the handwashing procedure (not rubbing for the 20 seconds, but rubbing all hand surfaces thoroughly; not wetting hands first but soap still makes bubbles, not turning off faucets with a paper towel). However, hands should be cleaned reasonably well. If handwashing and other sanitation issues are usually ignored completely, score 1.3 Yes. If attempts to complete handwashing usually occur when needed, even if incomplete, score 3.3 No. If there is a significant attempt to complete handwashing as required, even if some procedures are not done absolutely correctly, score 3.3, Yes.
11. Safety practices	Since cribs with sides that drop down are no longer considered safe for children, consider this issue in both the Nap item and the Safety item.
14. Using books	1.1, 3.1, 5.1  3.4 To give credit for much of the day, the numbers of books required in these indicators must be met.  If children are required to participate, but they quickly become engaged in the activity, obviously enjoying it, then score "Yes." Score "No" only if the children are not engaged or enjoying the activity and there is no alternative of leaving and doing something else.

15. Fine motor	3.1, 5.1	<p>When deciding how many fine motor toys to count as accessible to the children, consider the developmental level of all the children in the classroom, and whether each toy presented is complete enough to be used to add to the children's' fine motor development. The developmental expectations for how children will be able to use specific toys will also have an effect on scoring. For example, for the youngest infants who are limited to grasping or batting at things, individual objects (rattles, small soft animals, etc.) can each count as one example. However, as an exception to this rule, individual pieces belonging to a set of objects that make up one toy can only count as one example, even though the individual parts might be what a child uses. Thus, all the individual rings of a stacking ring toy or links from a set of linking toys will count as only one example, even if the various rings are included in a bin of grasping toys for infants.</p> <p>When determining the number of pieces required for a functional set (stacking rings, links, interlocking blocks, pop beads, peg boards with pegs), developmental expectations for productive use must also be considered. Obviously, any puzzle must have all its pieces to be a functional set because there is one right way to complete the puzzle and all pieces are needed. However, even for the more open-ended materials such as those listed above, developmental expectations must be considered in determining what a functional set must include. For example, for a 9-12 month old to use pop beads, only three or four beads would be required as the minimum number of beads in a set. However, to count as a set for older children more pop beads would be required because older children are more likely to connect larger numbers of beads.</p> <p>5.1 Because the intent of this indicator is to give children many fine motor toys and within the many toys, a <i>variety</i> of experiences, a set of materials (such as interlocking blocks or links) that has been divided into smaller individual sets with fewer pieces, each in its own container, can count as no more than two sets, even though the one large set might have been divided into more than two sets. Each smaller set must function in keeping with the purpose of the toy and be suited to the developmental abilities of the children in the group.</p>
16. Active physical play	3.1	Based on recommendations from the 2011 version of <i>Caring for Our Children</i> (page 66) change the time limit in the note for this indicator from 30 minutes to 15 minutes. No child should be kept restrained in a seat or other restrictive devise for more than 15 minutes except for a reasonable time while actively eating, or being fed.
17. Art		<p>Art materials such as crayons, chalk or play dough may have the warning "not recommended for use by children under 3 years of age." Unless such materials are labeled "Toxic" they may be used with younger children but only under the most stringent supervision (the teacher is within an arm's reach of the child and watches closely). The materials should not be freely accessible to the children. Materials that are less likely to cause safety problems, such as thicker crayons rather than thin ones should be used and the caps to markers should not be accessible. Art materials that smell like food should not be used. Art materials should be offered to children 12 months and older, but if a child <i>only</i> mouths the material, and shows no interest in using it for art, he should be redirected to a more appropriate activity.</p> <p>1.1, 3.1, 5.1 Crayons or other drawing materials (e.g., pencils, markers, chalk) are considered art materials in this item if used with plain paper or another plain surface, such as a chalk board. They are not counted as art materials when used with coloring book pages or other pre-determined projects. When used with coloring books, etc, they are considered in item 15. 5.1 Fine motor but not to meet the requirements for the Art item.</p> <p>1.1, 3.2 In addition to the recognizable edible materials in the existing note, materials that emit food related odors are also not given credit for being art materials (including scented play dough, felt pens and crayons, etc.) because they give children confusing messages.</p> <p>3.3 If children are required to participate, but they quickly become engaged in the activity, obviously enjoying it, then score "Yes." Score "No" only if the children are not engaged or enjoying the activity and there is no alternative of leaving and doing something else.</p>
18. Music and movement	3.3	If children are required to participate, but they quickly become engaged in the activity, obviously enjoying it, then score "Yes." Score "No" only if the children are not engaged or enjoying the activity and there is no alternative of leaving and doing something else.

---

19. Blocks  
There has been some inconsistency about the dimensions of blocks to be considered for this item, with some requiring that the blocks are "at least" 2 inches for the majority of sides, and others requiring "more than" 2 inches. To ensure reliability across assessors, blocks are now interpreted as having to be at least 2 inches for the majority of sides, rather than more than 2 inches. Although the definition of blocks in All About the ITERS-R states that blocks must have smooth sides, alphabet blocks or blocks with minor raised edges on the sides can be accepted as blocks as long as they meet the size requirement, are not interlocking and can easily be stacked.

- 3.1, Since this item is scored NA for groups where all children are under 12 months of age, when mixed groups of children under and over 12 months of age are observed, do not consider the access infants have to the blocks/accessories. Consider only the toddler aged children when scoring.  
3.2,  
3.3,  
5.1,  
7.1
- 

23. Use of TV, video and/or computer  
The American Academy of Pediatrics released new guidance for the use of technology with young children. This guidance is provided for parents at home with their children, not for early childhood programs. Many children are often exposed to large amounts of technology at home, and it is not in their best interests to add to that in early childhood programs. Therefore, the ERS item is to be interpreted as written, with the earlier additional note.

**If a child spends a very brief time using screen time (less than 2 minutes) and this is a rare occurrence during the observation, mark the item NA.**

- 1.3, Since the American Academy of Pediatrics states that children under the age of two should not be allowed to view television, due to persuasive research indicating negative effects for these youngest of children, change the age listed in these indicators from 12 to 24 months. In addition, media screen time is limited for children 2 years and older to not more than 30 minutes total, once a week, with only 15 minutes at a time per day for computer use. No media screen time should be allowed during meals/snacks.  
3.3
- 

24. Promoting acceptance of diversity  
5.1 Photographs of the children in the group and their families are given credit in Item 5. Display for children, indicator 7.1 and not as "pictures showing diversity" in this item, even if the children and their families in the class photos show diversity of race, culture, abilities or gender roles. In order to be given credit for this indicator, some picture examples, that have been selected intentionally by staff to clearly show diversity, are displayed so they are easy for children to see in the space used by the children most of the time.