

Creating an Environment for Sleeping and Nap Time

By themselves, cribs take up a lot of room in an infant environment. In addition, best practice in health care recommends that cribs be three feet apart. Check with your state and local policies to make sure you know what is required in your area. Finding the best arrangement for cribs so that children can sleep and also have a large enough area to play is a challenge. Because each infant sleeps on a personal schedule, you need to create an environment that is conducive to both sleeping and playing.

Some programs solve the problem by having a separate space dedicated just to sleeping. In fact, some state licensing regulations require this arrangement. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Public Health Association recommend that separate sleeping rooms for infants have at least 30 square feet per child.³⁰ In addition, if the room is walled off, a teacher needs to stay with even one child.

By choice or because space is limited, other programs place infants' cribs throughout the room or set them in a bedroom-like area. Where cribs are in the room, low walls or partial wall dividers may be used to reduce some of the surrounding visual stimulation and sounds that interfere with sleeping.

As infants grow, they begin to sleep on a more predictable schedule. Eventually, the individual schedules of the infants in your room will merge. Toddlers and twos generally sleep at the same time. At a regularly scheduled period, place cots throughout the room. Also remember to have a cot available for toddlers and twos who are sleepy when they arrive in the morning or who need to nap earlier than the group.

When setting up a sleeping area for infants and napping spaces for toddlers and twos, these strategies are very important.

Place nap time supplies close to cribs. The less you move around, the more easily children will fall asleep. A comfortable glider chair lets you rock a sleepy baby and then put him in his crib easily.

Have an individual crib, cot, or mat for each child. Assigning cribs, cots, mats, and bedding helps minimize the spread of head lice and infectious diseases. Labeling cribs, cots, and linens with children's names helps reserve their use for individual children.

Chapter 9: Sleeping and Nap Time

Make sure cribs are safe. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development makes these recommendations to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS):³¹

- Use firm crib mattresses.
- Place babies on their backs to sleep.
- Keep pillows, heavy blankets, comforters, stuffed toys, rattles, and squeeze toys out of cribs.
- If a thin blanket is used, make sure it does not reach higher than the baby's chest and that the ends of the blanket are tucked under the crib mattress.
- Make sure babies' heads and faces are uncovered while they sleep.
- Fasten bumper pads to the crib with at least six short safety straps to ensure a tight fit. Remove bumper pads when children learn to stand up or move around in the crib.
- Watch for strangulation hazards. Make sure that there are no dangling cords from blinds or drapes near cribs.
- Keep side rails up when children are in their cribs. Lower the crib height of the mattress when children begin to sit or stand. Watch for signs that infants have outgrown their cribs, for instance, when they can pull themselves off the crib floor by holding onto the railings. When cribs are no longer safe, move children to cots.

Provide children with clean sheets and bedding. Wash linens whenever they are soiled or wet. Generally, you should wash or send linens home for washing at least weekly. You may need to have linens for infants, toddlers, and twos washed more frequently. Store bedding so that it does not touch the surface of another child's cot. Your local health department can help you learn how to store bedding to help prevent the spread of disease.

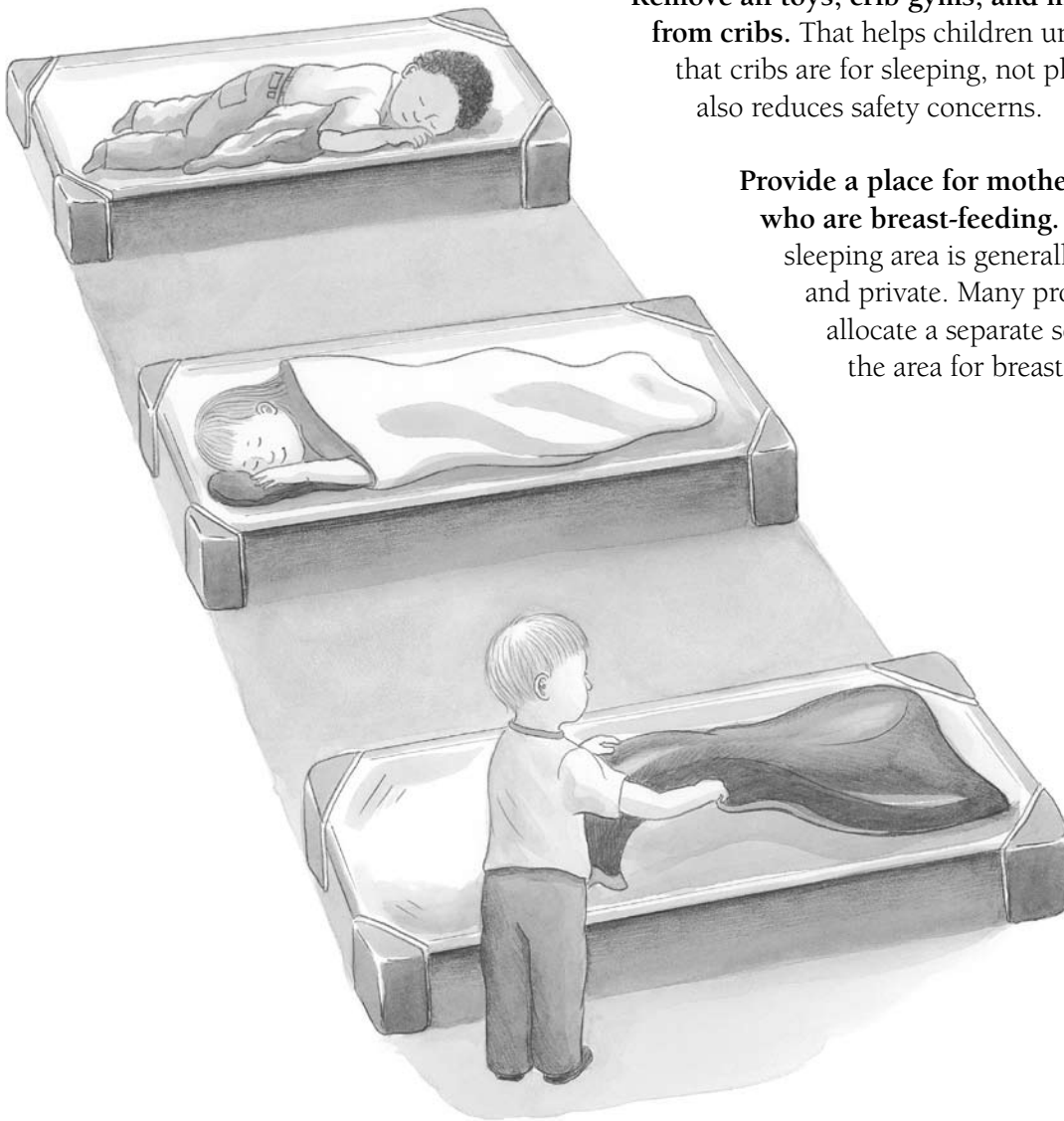
Provide evacuation cribs. Having evacuation cribs is an emergency measure. They are special cribs with 4-inch wheels, capable of holding up to five infants. Place an evacuation crib near an emergency exit.

Be sure that each child sleeps in the same place each day. Place cribs, cots, or mats in the same place each day. The regularity eliminates confusion, helps children develop a sense of their own place, and promotes security and trust.

Create peaceful spaces where children can sleep. Absorb noise by using carpeting. Putting curtains on the windows reduces unwanted light. Where lighting is necessary, make it soft. If room barriers are not available, you can move cribs, cots, or mats to places in your room where you can diminish noise and visual stimulation.

Remove all toys, crib gyms, and mobiles from cribs. That helps children understand that cribs are for sleeping, not playing. It also reduces safety concerns.

Provide a place for mothers who are breast-feeding. The sleeping area is generally quiet and private. Many programs allocate a separate section in the area for breast-feeding.



Copyright © 2006 by Teaching Strategies, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without prior written permission from Teaching Strategies, Inc., except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.

The publisher and the authors cannot be held responsible for injury, mishap, or damages incurred during the use of or because of the information in this book. The authors recommend appropriate and reasonable supervision at all times based on the age and capability of each child.