

# Tennessee Additional Notes to ECERS-R

## Overview

The purpose of the Tennessee additional notes is to improve the interrater agreements of assessors, and to provide further interpretation of items and indicators to assist with scoring decisions by Tennessee Assessment Program Staff (APS). The notes were developed for use in Tennessee, but follow the intent of scale application as defined by Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford and Debby Cryer, authors of the scale. Some of the information used in the additional notes was adapted from the Environment Rating Scales and All About the ECERS-R. The additional notes provided for the ECERS-R scale clarify information to help in accurate scoring. The All About the ECERS-R is a resource for use with the Environment Rating Scales. It is not required for scoring. This resource can be purchased or checked out from a CCR&R or TECTA office.

**Be sure to replace older notes with newer notes.**

**Most recent updates are:**

**October, 2009: General Notes, Items 7, 8, 10, 14, 16, 28, 35 and 36 (Some General Notes have been moved directly under the items)**

May 5, 2009: General Notes, Items 7, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 23, 28, 29 and 31

April 28, 2008: General Notes, Items 7, 8, 10, 23

January 1, 2008: Overview, General Notes, Item 3,4, 8, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28,33, 35, 36, 37

April 30, 2007: General Note, Item 7, Item 11, Item 13 and Item 23

November 1, 2006: Item 11; Item 26

August 1, 2006: General Notes; Item 10

## General Notes for ECERS-R

This note pertains to Items 3, Furnishings for relaxation and comfort-indicators 3.1 and 3.2; 7, Space for gross motor play-indicator 3.1; 8, Gross motor equipment-indicator 3.1; 15, Books and pictures-indicators 3.1 and 5.2; 16, Encouraging children to communicate-indicator 3.2; 19, Fine motor-indicator 3.1; 20, Art-indicator 3.1; 21, Music-indicators 3.1 and 5.1; 22, Blocks- indicator 3.3; 23, Sand water-indicator 5.3; 24, Dramatic play-indicator 3.2; 25, Nature/science-indicator 3.2; 26, Math/number-indicator 3.2; 34, Schedule-indicator 3.3; and 35, Free play-indicator 3.1. For materials to be counted as accessible to children, they must be able to reach and use the materials for a period of 1 hour a day in a program of 8 hours or more. The 1 hour can be provided at one time or as a combination of several periods throughout the day. This does not mean that each child must have a full hour to use the materials. However, it is required that children have a reasonable chance to use the materials at some time if they wish. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally, based on the ratio of 1 hour for programs of 8 hours or more. For example, if a program operated for 6 hours a day, this would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a full-day program, so the time required would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 1 hour. Use this chart to determine the approximate amount of time needed in programs operating less than 8 hours.

Number of hours in operation	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours	5 hours	6 hours	7 hours
Approximate minutes required for accessibility	15	25	30	40	45	50

For any program, credit for "substantial portion of the day" can be given if the program is "off" by 10 minutes or less when calculating a third of the time. For programs with wrap around childcare, use the total day as a basis for calculating the "substantial portion".

At the 3 level, materials are considered accessible only if it is observed that children freely access and are permitted to use most of the materials. Ex. Some materials may not be accessible during the observation. Additional questions may be needed to gain information on other times of the day. **For programs operating more than 5 hours a day, in order to meet substantial portion of the day at the 5 level there should be no significant extended periods of time where structured activities prevent access to materials. Access must be observed throughout the day. In after school programs where children are present for less than 5 hours, the schedule should reflect several opportunities to access materials because children have been in large group, structured activities for much of the school day.**

**Levels of quality build expectations from minimal to good to excellent. Consider not only the requirements of the indicator, but the level of quality documented as general practice throughout the observation.**

With regards to supervision, staff must be able to hear the child at all times, must be able to see the child with a quick glance, and must be able to physically respond immediately, leaving no child unattended. Special attention during high risk activities, such as eating, etc. are required to adequately protect children. The ages and developmental level of the children should also be taken into consideration during these activities to determine the level of supervision needed. (TN 1/1/08)

Disinfectant and/or anti-bacterial wipes do not count for sanitization purposes. Products that can be given credit as sanitizing solutions are: bleach and water solution; or a commercial product that states on the label or manufacturer's products sheet it kills 99.9% of germs, kills HIV virus, or is an EPA registered product. All commercial products used for sanitizing must be used according to manufacturer's instruction.

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## Tennessee Additional Notes to ECERS-R

The following indicators are connected indicators. When credit is not given for the first indicator, credit cannot be given for the second indicator: 5/5.1 & 5.2, 19/5.1 & 5.2, 22/3.1 & 3.3, 5.3 & 5.4, 24/3.1 & 3.2, 5.1 & 5.2, 25/3.1 & 3.2, 5.1 & 5.2, 26/3.1 & 3.2, 5.1 and 5.2.

Items to be omitted from TN scoring: #38, #39, #40, #41, #42, #43

### Specific Notes for ECERS-R

#### 1. Indoor Space

7.2 Ventilation control must be in the classroom for credit to be given.

#### 3. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

3.1 The floor covering must be large enough to permit at least one child to stretch out and lounge comfortably on the area with several toys to play with.

#### 4. Room arrangement for play

1.2, 3.2 If there are two staff members in the room during the observation, but only 1 staff member at other times, this should be considered in scoring the item.

#### 6. Child related display

5.1 Child-created display meets the intent of the entire indicator.

#### 7. Space for gross motor play

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Tennessee Playground Safety Sheet found at [www.tnstarquality.org](http://www.tnstarquality.org).

**When there are more than 5 minor hazards or if there are 2 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 5 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.**

**1.2, 3.2 Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.**

3.1 To give credit, the space must be accessible daily for at least 1 hour in an 8 hour program, prorated appropriately for shorter programs (see chart in general notes).

#### 8. Gross motor equipment

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5.1 Stationary equipment that is used by several children at one time and is the only option, means that the children can use it without crowding or long waits.

5.2 This requires daily access to at least 7-9 skills; however, on days with inclement weather there should be at least 3-5 skills.

#### 10. Meals/ snacks

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## Tennessee Additional Notes to ECERS-R

**1.2, 3.2** The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to children. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods is necessary. Use the Food Guide to determine whether the components are present. The guidelines also require ALL components be served together. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., whole grain vs. white breads; fresh vs. canned vegetables, high vs. low sugar or fat content, etc.) are not to be used in determining the quality of foods served. Foods that are perishable should not be left out longer than 1 hour. Regardless of source or ages served, 75% of all children must receive meals and snacks that meet USDA guidelines. Providers may supplement if they choose in order to guarantee 75% compliance. Programs that choose to “offer” rather than “serve” food (i.e. family style serving, school-age multiple choice snacks) carry an additional responsibility to encourage appropriate choices and model good nutritional habits. **Combination foods are foods with multiple components that have been packaged together or combined during the cooking process. Combination foods can be counted to meet up to two different components. Scoring consideration of combination foods should be balanced with other items on the menu. Foods that might be served together, but do not meet the definition of combination foods can count for up to 3 components (i.e. hamburgers, sandwiches, cereal and milk with added fruit). When vegetable garnishes are served in sufficient quantities, they may be considered to meet the requirement as a vegetable. Breading on meat products may not be counted. Cooked dry beans, such as kidney or black beans which are considered to be an excellent source of protein, can count as either a protein or vegetable. However green beans, like string or lima beans which aren’t considered to be good sources of protein, should only be counted as a vegetable.**

**1.3, 3.3** Eating surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized prior to, and following, use for food service. Follow the “2-step” process. Eating surfaces should be: 1) washed with a soap and water mixture to remove gross soil and, 2) sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals/snacks. To allow bleach-water solution to do its job, it should be allowed to sit for at least 10 seconds (preferably longer) before wiping dry or allowing to air dry. For other acceptable sanitizing agents, refer to the general notes. If proper sanitary measures are clearly practiced as part of the child care program, but an occasional lapse does occur, credit can be given. Occasional lapse for children equates to 75% of the time. To score adult handwashing, the lapse equates to the impact it has or is going to have on the children. In the case where snack time is flexible and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required (i.e., table sanitized between children using same places, children’s hands washed, etc.). If children finger feed themselves during meals, then children should have hands washed after eating. Recontamination of hands is addressed here. To allow staff to keep their focus on children while they are eating, a separate wipe may be used on each child’s hands that have finished eating and may leave the table. When the last child has finished eating, all children should be expected to wash hands (except children without head control). Hands must be washed with soap and running water at least 75% of the time.

**3.5 The list of food allergies does not have to be publicly displayed; however, directions for finding this information should be publicly displayed in the room where children eat.**

### 11. Nap

3.2 Two coverings are required for children over 12 months of age - One to cover the type of bedding used and one for the child to have access to in order to cover up with. Bedding should be washed weekly. With the exception of cots, sleeping provisions should be 2 inches thick.

### 12. Toileting/ diapering

For proper sanitary diaper change procedure, refer to the TN 10-Step Diapering Process.

3.4 Diapers should be visually checked approximately every 2 hours.

### 13. Health Practices

3.1 While combining all categories to determine 75%, priority should be given to handwashing when dealing with bodily fluids (blood and mucous). Consider the impact upon the children.

### 14. Safety Practices

**For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Tennessee Playground Safety Sheet found at [www.tnstarquality.org](http://www.tnstarquality.org).**

**When there are more than 5 minor hazards or if there are 2 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 5 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.**

**1.1, 3.1 Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might**

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## Tennessee Additional Notes to ECERS-R

**fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.**

### 15. Books and Pictures

5.2 Some is defined, as being used daily and that there are at least two materials in addition to books accessible daily.

5.3 Since young children cannot read, the book area should be designed for children to view books by seeing the fronts of the books. If only the spines are showing credit cannot be given.

5.4 Violence in books and pictures is not appropriate for preschool children because they can't distinguish between fantasy and reality. Discount if 25% or more of books accessible to children show violence that is graphic.

5.5 Informal reading is defined as a caregiver reading to 1, 2 or a small group of children outside of a structured, organized reading time. Informal reading must be observed at least once to get credit for this indicator.

### 16. Encouraging children to communicate

3.1 Four instances must be observed during the observation during group time and free play.

3.2 There should be enough materials to encourage communication without competition and conflict due to scarcity.

#### 5.2 Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

7.2 In order to give credit for this indicator, some evidence must be observed. Consider the ages and abilities of the children.

### 18. Informal use of language

3.1 At least two examples of conversation must be observed during the observation.

### 20. Art

7.2 Art activities related to other classroom experiences should allow children to do art in their own ways, while considering a topic being discussed and experienced in the class.

### 21. Music/ movement

3.3 Children must be able to do at least one movement activity at least once per week.

5.2 Variety can be considered in songs sung in the classroom in addition to tapes, records, and/or CDs. All words to music that is played, sung, or chanted should be appropriate for children; discount here if it is not.

### 22. Blocks

3.2 Some means that the space, although not necessarily large, does allow the children to successfully balance, build and create structures in their block play. The space size would allow two children to build successfully without undue interference from one another or from others.

5.2 Centers should be organized to encourage independent use. Interest areas should be well defined and have accessories within the block area, so that the child doesn't have to go to other places in the room to find accessories.

5.4 If two or more block areas are present, all may be considered in calculating accessibility for substantial part of the day. However, only one must meet the criteria for a special block area. The other block area may be outdoors or in another indoor space.

7.3 Some block play, available outdoors means that the children have opportunities for more active block play without the space and noise restrictions associated with being indoors. A large number of blocks are not required but there should be enough blocks so children can explore, build and experiment without difficulty. The outdoor blocks do not need to be accessible daily, but should be available for the teacher to add to the other outdoor activities.

### 23. Sand/water

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3.1 Provision means that staff have made accessible the equipment and materials needed for children to be able to play in sand and/or water (or an appropriate substitute) in a meaningful way.

3.2 There must be at least two or more toys for children to use with sand or water (or an appropriate substitute) during the sensory activity.

5.2 For Tennessee purposes, variety means a minimum of 3 different types of items accessible for sand and water play.

5.3 Change the word “available” to “accessible.” To give credit, the materials must be accessible daily for at least 1 hour in an 8 hour program, prorated appropriately for shorter programs (see chart in general notes).

### 24. Dramatic play

3.1 There should be enough dramatic play materials for children to be able to carry out meaningful pretend play. Some requires enough materials for several children to use at one time. This may vary with the age and ability of the children in the group, with more required for older children. Classrooms with more children will require more materials than classroom with fewer children.

### 25. Nature/science

3.1 There should be more than one developmentally appropriate (useable for play or exploration) games/materials/activities accessible to children from two of the nature/science categories.

### 26. Math/ numbers

5.1 "Many" means approximately 3-5 of each type. However, this can vary, as long as all five types are represented.

5.2 Requirements for 5.1 must be met in order to give credit for 5.2.

### 27. Use of TV, video and or computers

7.1 Software encouraging creativity must be an option that is used regularly, at least, once a week or more frequently.

### 28. Promoting acceptance of diversity

3.3 If no prejudice is observed, and the observer sees plenty of evidence that such behavior would be very unlikely, give credit.

### 5.1, 5.2 Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

5.2 Delete the current note for clarification. Replace with “To give credit, three examples **representing different elements of diversity** (examples: clothing, skin tone, food, abilities, eating utensils and dishes, etc.) **found in more than one type of prop** must be accessible for use in dramatic play indoors or outdoors.”

7.2 Activities should be provided at least 4 times a year.

### 29. Supervision of gross motor activities

5.3, 7.1 and 7.3 To give credit, these must be observed at least once.

### 30. General supervision

3.1 Discount if children are not adequately supervised while eating.

### 31. Discipline

3.1 Discount if teacher/caregiver uses harsh punishment, threatens, or physically disciplines any child.

7.2 If not observed, credit can be given if staff provide examples. These opportunities should occur at least once a week.

### 33. Interactions among children

3.3 Positive peer interaction must be observed occasionally during the observation.

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7.2 If not observed, credit can be given if staff provide examples of opportunities for children to work together to complete a task. These opportunities should occur at least once a week.

### 35. Free play

3.3 Some toys, games and equipment means enough for children to use in free play without undue competition. There must also be enough materials accessible so children can make choices about what to play with.

**5.1 Time spent outdoors and indoors should be significant enough that children become engaged in meaningful free play. Length of time may vary depending on the ages of the children and their needs.**

### 36. Group time

3.1 Some play activities requires that children are not kept together as a whole group most of the day.

3.2 Opportunities require that children have the chance to participate in one or more self-selected groups at least one time during the day. Credit cannot be given if the staff determines the makeup of the small groups.

5.3 Delete the word “some.” It should read “routines done in small groups or individually.” **There should be clear indication that as part of the general practice, routines are done individually or in small groups.**

### 37. Provisions for children with disabilities

ECERS 37, ITERS-R 32, FDCRS 35 and 40, and SACERS 44 should be scored NA unless a child with a disability that has been diagnosed through a formal assessment procedure and receives (or is eligible for) early intervention services is enrolled. Across all four scales, the following aspects should be considered when scoring: modifications, parent involvement, inclusion, and use of assessment information. Look for the extent of modifications needed to the schedule or classroom to include the child in daily activities, parent and staff communication regarding the child’s assessment information and ongoing therapy, and the use of assessment information into planning throughout the day. Some parents may not share all information with staff for various reasons. Consider the levels of quality when determining if staff and parents have shared enough information to meet the child’s needs. Even if staff put significant effort into asking about a child’s needs, if parents share no information, the child’s development is compromised.

3.3 Involvement can take place through formal meetings, informal conversations or phone or written communications.

3.4 Involvement means a child with a disability/special need sometimes participates with others in the class, and at other times may not. The child should sometimes (but not necessarily always) participate in play as well as routine care activities.