

The How and Why of Using Small Groups in Preschool

The benefits of small group activities for teachers are plenty. When children work in small groups, this will free up teachers to focus on a few children at a time. Teachers may be able to observe children more closely. Also, teachers have the choice to place children in groups based on ability or interests.

Focused learning and cooperative play are the hallmarks of small group activities. The preschool classroom is the perfect place to begin learning the give and take of working together with other students, as well as really diving into projects and activities that you really love.

Art: Cooperative murals - Provide a small group of children with a large sheet of butcher paper as well as markers or crayons. Ask them to create a street scene, or draw a picture of the school and playground. Make sure all children are able to express their ideas and children work together to create one picture.

Blocks: Building the Zoo - To incorporate an animal theme, have children work together to create a zoo for some plastic animals. Have the group decide who will be the chief architect, as well as who will be in charge of the elephant house, the bird habitat or the petting farm.

Manipulatives: Board Games - Small groups are ideal for introducing simple board games to preschoolers such as Chutes and Ladders, Cootie or CandyLand. Teacher made file folder games are wonderful for preschoolers, also.

Dramatic Play: Restaurant - Open up a pretend restaurant in your dramatic play center! Allow children to work in small groups to create a menu, decorate the restaurant, set the tables and cook the food. Have children decide who will be the head chef, the maitre'd, the waiter and the customers.

Reference: Taylor, Barbara J., *Early Childhood Program Management*. Macmillan Publishing.