



# Treasure Baskets



# HighScope Infant and Toddler Key Developmental Indicators (KDIs)

## A. Approaches to Learning

1. **Initiative:** Children express initiative.
2. **Problem solving:** Children solve problems encountered in exploration and play.
3. **Self-help:** Children do things for themselves.

## B. Social and Emotional Development

4. **Distinguishing self and others:** Children distinguish themselves from others.
5. **Attachment:** Children form an attachment to a primary caregiver.
6. **Relationships with adults:** Children build relationships with other adults.
7. **Relationships with peers:** Children build relationships with peers.
8. **Emotions:** Children express emotions.
9. **Empathy:** Children show empathy toward the feelings and needs of others.
10. **Playing with others:** Children play with others.
11. **Group participation:** Children participate in group routines.

## C. Physical Development and Health

12. **Moving parts of the body:** Children move parts of the body (turning head, grasping, kicking).
13. **Moving the whole body:** Children move the whole body (rolling, crawling, cruising, walking, running, balancing).
14. **Moving with objects:** Children move with objects.
15. **Steady beat:** Children feel and experience steady beat.

## D. Communication, Language, and Literacy

16. **Listening and responding:** Children listen and respond.
17. **Nonverbal communication:** Children communicate nonverbally.
18. **Two-way communication:** Children participate in two-way communication.
19. **Speaking:** Children speak.
20. **Exploring print:** Children explore picture books and magazines.
21. **Enjoying language:** Children enjoy stories, rhymes, and songs.

## E. Cognitive Development

22. **Exploring objects:** Children explore objects with their hands, feet, mouth, eyes, ears, and nose.
23. **Object permanence:** Children discover object permanence.
24. **Exploring same and different:** Children explore and notice how things are the same or different.
25. **Exploring more:** Children experience "more."
26. **One-to-one correspondence:** Children experience one-to-one correspondence.
27. **Number:** Children experience the number of things.
28. **Locating objects:** Children explore and notice the location of objects.
29. **Filling and emptying:** Children fill and empty, put in and take out.
30. **Taking apart and putting together:** Children take things apart and fit them together.
31. **Seeing from different viewpoints:** Children observe people and things from various perspectives.
32. **Anticipating events:** Children anticipate familiar events.
33. **Time intervals:** Children notice the beginning and ending of time intervals.
34. **Speed:** Children experience "fast" and "slow."
35. **Cause and effect:** Children repeat an action to make something happen again, experience cause and effect.

## F. Creative Arts

36. **Imitating and pretending:** Children imitate and pretend.
37. **Exploring art materials:** Children explore building and art materials.
38. **Identifying visual images:** Children respond to and identify pictures and photographs.
39. **Listening to music:** Children listen to music.
40. **Responding to music:** Children respond to music.
41. **Sounds:** Children explore and imitate sounds.
42. **Vocal pitch:** Children explore vocal pitch sounds.

## What Is Heuristic Play?

*Heuristic play* is a planned activity that offers children the opportunity to explore various objects, using and developing all of their senses. Characteristics of heuristic play:

- Includes exploration that helps in problem solving
- Involves experimentation and learning through trial and error
- Stimulates all the senses, creating a rich learning experience

## Why Is Heuristic Play Important?

Heuristic play develops these abilities:

- Manipulative skills
- Anticipation
- Imagination
- Sequencing
- Memory
- Understanding cause and effect
- Problem solving
- Key developmental indicators (KDIs)
- Concentration

## What Is a Treasure Basket?

A treasure basket

- ◆ Is a shallow sturdy basket containing a collection of everyday familiar and natural items for babies and toddlers to play with.
- ◆ Allows children to explore the materials using their senses to discover what an object is, its characteristics, and what they can do with it.
- ◆ Engages all the senses (taste, touch, smell, hear, see).
- ◆ Contains items that vary in weight, size, texture, color, taste, temperature, and sound.
- ◆ Can be made with any kind of container (e.g., boxes, baskets, metal or large wooden bowls)

### Safety

- ◆ Choose a basket or other container that is strong and durable without jagged edges.
- ◆ Objects should be washable, disposable, and replaceable, for example, pieces of fabric or recycled items. Each object should be clean and safe.
- ◆ Always check the basket regularly for broken or overused objects.
- ◆ As always, check the ingredients of the materials to make sure they are nontoxic. If in doubt, don't include them.
- ◆ **Never leave young children, especially babies, alone with baskets of materials.**

## Caregiver Interaction

- ◆ The most important thing for a caregiver to remember is to be attentive and calm, creating a relaxed atmosphere. Be available to the child during their play and exploration.
- ◆ As the baby plays, the provider's role is to sit nearby and be attentive, responsive, and unobtrusive — babies need to make their own choices about which objects they are going to pick up and how they are going to explore them. Babies will have a richer and more stimulating experience — and will develop confidence and the ability to concentrate — if they are encouraged to explore at their own pace, without being shown which things to play with and how to use them.

## Safety With Nontypical Materials

- ◆ Many nontypical materials (for example, boxes, cookie tins, utensils, stacking materials, large shells, and rocks, as opposed to plastic materials only) can be safely placed in the environment for infants' and toddlers' use at all times.
- ◆ **Materials that are dangerous for children to use without the provider's presence should be brought out only when the provider is available to observe and interact directly with the children.**
- ◆ If there are materials that you are uncomfortable having in your environment (for example, a metal chain), think outside the box and incorporate alternative materials (for example, a metal whisk) that could provide a similar sensory-motor experience.
- ◆ The provider's interaction with the child is a key factor that enhances children's learning as they use nontypical materials. Use adult scaffolding strategies that support active learning.
- ◆ Make safe materials accessible to children by placing them in open baskets or clear containers on low shelves.
- ◆ Materials that should be used only when the provider is working with the child can be stored out of the room, in closets or high on shelves in clear out-of-reach containers so toddlers can point to or ask to use them when the provider is available.
- ◆ Some materials may need to be accessible to toddlers or older children but not to babies. Store such materials in clear containers with twist-top lids so toddlers and older children can get to them but the youngest children cannot.
- ◆ Activity times are the most appropriate times during the day for children to experience treasure baskets and other heuristic materials requiring the adult's presence, but outside time and play time can be considered as well. The most important factor to consider when choosing a time is when your children are most likely to be interested and alert (e.g., not when they are tired, hungry, or have just woken up).

## Playthings That Appeal to the Senses

### Aromatic materials

- Strong-smelling wooden balls and boxes
- Wool, felt, and leather balls
- Sturdy rubber balls and teething rings
- Tennis balls
- Sturdily constructed cloth bags filled with common household spices
- Wicker baskets and woven mats
- Scented marking pens
- Bread dough, play dough, and clay
- Shaving cream
- Newspaper
- Flowering plants
- Grass, leaves, bark, flowers, rain, and other natural outdoor materials
- Smells of food being prepared and cooked
- A variety of foods to eat and smell

### Sound-producing materials

- Rattles
- Firmly sealed film cans partially filled with beans, rice, pea gravel, water
- Rain sticks
- Castanets, harmonicas
- Pan lids, metal juice-can lids, metal and wooden spoons and bowls
- Bells, wrist bells
- Crinkly paper
- Wind chimes, ticking clocks, chiming clocks, music boxes
- Recordings
- Singing
- Outdoor sound sources (vehicles, outdoor play voices, weather, birds and other animals)
- Flags and streamers that flap in the breeze
- Rain on the roof or windows

### Materials to touch, taste, and look at

#### *Objects from nature*

- Pine cones
- Small stones
- Shells
- Dried gourds
- Large nuts, fresh avocado pits
- Big feathers
- Pumice stone
- Natural cork pieces
- Natural sponge
- Pieces of loofah
- Lemons, apples

#### *Objects made of natural materials*

- Wooden balls
- Small baskets
- Bottle corks
- Small raffia mats
- Brushes with natural bristles and wooden handles (for nails, teeth, shaving, shoes, house painting, cosmetics)

#### *Wooden objects*

- Small boxes
- Small drum on wooden frame
- Rattles
- Castanets
- Clothes pins
- Colored beads on a string
- Inch cubes
- Spools, bobbins
- Spoons, spatulas
- Egg cups
- Small bowls

(Continued on next page)

## Playthings That Appeal to the Senses (cont.)

### *Metal objects*

- Measuring spoons
- Teaspoons, soup spoons, serving spoons
- Small whisks
- Bunches of keys
- Small cookie tins
- Small pot-pie tins
- Chains of various sizes
- Lemon squeezer
- Small funnels
- Brass curtain rings
- Small harmonica
- Garlic press
- Whistles
- Bottle brushes
- Small metal mirrors
- Key rings linked together
- Bunches of bells
- Triangles
- Closed tins (containing rice, beans, gravel)
- Tea strainers
- Bicycle bells
- Tea infusers

### *Paper/cardboard items*

- Small spiral notebooks
- Greaseproof paper
- Aluminum foil
- Small cardboard boxes
- Paper towel/cardboard tubes
- Board books

### *Objects made of leather, cloth, rubber, or fur*

- Leather purse
- Small leather bag or leather key case with zipper
- Glasses case
- Colored marble “eggs”
- High-bouncing balls
- Lengths of rubber tubing
- Bath/drain plugs with chain
- Velvet powder puffs
- Fur ball
- Small rag dolls
- Small teddy bears
- Beanbags
- Balls of yarn
- Pot holders
- Bandanas
- Silk scarves
- Small cloth bags sewn shut like beanbags containing various spices (lavender, rosemary, thyme, cloves)
- Tennis balls
- Golf balls

**Source:** Adapted from Jacalyn Post, Mary Hohmann, and Ann S. Epstein. (2011). *Tender Care and Early Learning: Supporting Infants and Toddlers in Early Childhood Settings*. Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press, pp. 266–267.



## Implementation Plan

1. Look at the list of materials that you would like to get for your home, and discuss with a partner how you can collect these materials.

2. Write out a plan for ways to begin collecting materials and how you will store them.