

All About Space and Place

What Is Space and Place Knowledge?

Space and place knowledge includes understanding:

- Where things are. Near or far?
Above or below other objects?
Right or left?
- How to move around the world to get from one place to another.

Why Is Learning About Space and Place Important?

Thinking about space and place helps us every day as we:

- Plan the best route to school
- Remember where we left our keys or backpack.
- Use a map to get to a new place.

What Do Children Need to Know About Space and Place?

- **Spatial words** that describe positions, like *between*, *behind*, *on top*.
- **How to use maps and diagrams**, like reading a map to get to a friend's home.
- **How objects or scenes look from different places.** “What would you see if you moved to the other side of the room?” This is called perspective taking.



The couch is in front of the window. The cat is on top of the couch. There are plants next to and behind the couch.

How Can We Help Children Learn About Space and Place?

Use words to describe where objects are located when cleaning up or playing. Hands-on activities, like building with blocks or household objects (such as cans and boxes) and putting together puzzles, can also support learning about space.

Babies and Toddlers

- **Talk about space and place in storybook pictures.** “That frog is *on top* of the log. Look at the hippo hiding *behind* the tree!”
- **Describe space and place when playing.** As you wiggle with your baby, say, “Baby is *up*, baby is *down*, baby is *turning round* and *round*.”
- **Use household materials to explore space and place.** Cups and boxes can fit together or be taken apart. “Look at how the *little* cup fits *inside* the *bigger* cup.”

Preschoolers and Older Children

- **Play guessing games using space and place words.** “Is it *inside* the cabinet? Is it *next to* the chair?” Take turns guessing and providing clues!
- **Get active with space.** On the playground: “Go *down* the slide, then *through* the tunnel, and *over* the balance beam.” At home, say, “Walk *between* the chairs, then *under* the table.”
- **Use language about place.** When playing games like Simon Says or Hokey Pokey, you might say, “Lift your hands *high*, kneel down *low*” or “Put your *right* hand *in*, put your *right* hand *out*.”
- **Make it fun!** Hide an object in the room and create a simple treasure map to help children find it. Give clues such as, “Try looking *lower*” or “You’re getting *closer*!”