

Creating a Positive Learning Environment Checklist

1) Relationships & Belonging

Check what you're already doing:

- Greet every child by name (and try to connect 10–20 seconds)
- Use warm, calm tone—even during correction
- Notice effort (“You kept trying”) more than results
- Teach class expectations as skills (not assumptions)
- Use inclusive language: “Everyone belongs here”
- Plan for children who need extra time to warm up (soft start options)

Try this tomorrow: “I’m glad you’re here. You matter.”

2) Classroom Setup

- Clear pathways (less running/bumping)
- Materials are reachable and labeled with pictures/words
- Enough duplicates of high-interest items to reduce conflict



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- Defined areas for loud/active play and quiet play
- Cozy/calming space (not a punishment spot)
- Visual schedule posted at child level
 - Simple “where it goes” labels for cleanup

Try this tomorrow: Put “most fought-over” items into 2–3 duplicates.

3) Routines & Transitions

- Predictable daily routine (kids know what’s next)
- Transition warnings (2 minutes + 1 minute)
- Transition jobs (line leader, door holder, cleanup captain)
- Songs/chants for cleanup and lining up
- Short directions (1–2 steps at a time for young children)
- Something to do while waiting (books, finger plays, “I spy”)

Try this tomorrow: Use a visual timer + “when/then” language:
“When we clean up blocks, then we go outside.”

4) Positive Guidance

- Give choices (“Do you want to walk or hop to the sink?”)



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- State what you want kids to do (“Feet on the floor”)
- Catch kids being successful (specific praise)
- Teach social skills directly (sharing, turn-taking, asking to join)
- Use calm, consistent consequences (related + respectful)
- Redirect early before behaviors escalate

Try this tomorrow: Replace “Don’t run” with “Walking feet.”

5) Teacher Language That Builds Cooperation

Use phrases that reduce power struggles:

- “I can help you.”
- “Let’s try it together.”
- “Show me safe hands.”
- “You’re having a hard time. I’m here.”
- “First ____, then ____.”

Avoid:

- “You know better.”
- “Stop crying.”
- “Why did you do that?” (in the moment)



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6) Teaching Expectations

- Model expected behavior (show what it looks like)
- Practice expectations like a game (freeze, line up, inside voice)
- Re-teach after breaks/holidays/new children
- Use simple visuals (hands, feet, ears)

Try this tomorrow: Practice “listening body” for 10 seconds before circle time.

7) Supporting Big Feelings

- Calm area is available to everyone (not a timeout corner)
- Tools are taught when kids are calm (not only when upset)
- Adults coach: breathe, squeeze, name feeling, problem-solve
- Kids can rejoin when regulated

Calm tools ideas: soft toy, sensory bottle, feelings cards, fidget, breathing poster.

8) Family Partnership



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- Share positives regularly (not just problems)
- Ask about what works at home (“What helps when they’re upset?”)
- Align language (same words for potty, calm down, transitions)
- Keep plans simple (1–2 strategies at a time)

Quick “Reset Plan” (When the Room Feels Off)

If things are escalating, do a 2–5 minute reset:

1. Movement: “Shake your hands, reach up, touch toes.”
2. Breath: “Smell the flower, blow the candle.”
3. Reconnect: “Turn to a friend and say something kind.”
4. Re-teach the next routine: “Here’s how we line up safely.”



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