

Practical Supervision Strategies

What “Adequate Supervision” Looks Like

Adequate supervision is more than “being in the room.” It includes:

- **Positioning:** you are placed where you can see and reach children quickly
 - **Scanning:** your eyes move regularly across the whole space
 - **Counting:** you know how many children you have at all times
 - **Listening:** you respond to sounds that signal risk or distress
 - **Anticipating:** you notice hazards and step in before problems happen
 - **Engaging:** you are close enough to coach safe play and prevent conflict
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Core Supervision Strategies (All Classrooms)

1) Position to See + Move

Goal: maximum visibility with quick access.

- Stand where you can see **most children**, not the most furniture.
- Keep pathways open so you can move fast.
- Avoid “back-to-the-room” positions for long periods.

Try this: Identify “blind spots” and rearrange shelves/centers if needed.



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2) Scan, Count, and Recount

Goal: always know your group.

- **Scan** every few seconds in active play.
- **Count:**
 - before/after going outside
 - before/after playground time
 - before/after meals
 - before/after nap
 - when moving rooms
- Do name-to-face checks when possible (not just headcounts).

Try this: Use a consistent count routine: “count → move → count.”

3) Supervise Transitions Like a Safety Event

Transitions are when injuries and missing-child incidents are more likely.

- Assign roles: “front,” “middle,” “back,” “door” (even with small groups)
- Bring supplies so you don’t leave children unattended (diapers, wipes, first aid radio, etc.)
- Keep children busy while waiting (songs, hand motions)

Try this: Never turn your back to the group to clean up “real quick.”



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4) Supervise High-Risk Areas Extra Closely

Examples: playground equipment, climbing structures, gates/doors, bathrooms, water tables, sensory bins with small parts.

Try this rule: High-risk areas = staff stay **within arm's reach** for toddlers.

5) Engage to Prevent Problems

Adequate supervision includes being engaged enough to prevent:

- pushing/grabbing
- unsafe climbing
- biting incidents
- wandering

Try these prompts:

- “Feet stay on the floor.”
 - “Hands are for helping.”
 - “Show me safe climbing—one step at a time.”
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Nursery / Infant Room Supervision

1) Always Maintain “Touch Supervision” When Needed

Use touch/arm's reach supervision during:



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- bottle feeding
- diapering prep
- infant on changing table (never leave)
- tummy time with multiple infants
- transitions (moving infants, carriers, cribs)

Key rule: If you must step away, take the infant with you or call another staff.

2) Safe Sleep Supervision Routine

- Place infants on their backs in approved sleep spaces (per program policy)
- Keep cribs clear (no loose bedding, pillows, toys)
- **Visually check** sleeping infants regularly and document per policy
- Position yourself so you can see cribs while still supporting awake infants

Try this: Set your “home base” chair so cribs are in your line of sight.

3) Bottle Feeding Supervision

- Hold infants during feeding (no propping bottles)
- Stay seated, eyes on baby
- Watch for signs of discomfort or choking
- Keep distractions low during feeding times



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4) Diapering Supervision (Infants + Toddlers)

- Prepare supplies before placing the child on the table
- Keep one hand on the child whenever possible
- Never turn away to grab something—call for support if needed
- Sanitize the station after each change (per policy)

5) Supervision During Floor Play

- Create zones: tummy time / rolling space / sitting toys
 - Keep small objects out of reach
 - Sit on the floor to be at infant level and reduce missed cues
 - Use scanning + engagement: narrate while watching
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Supervision Strategies by Setting

Outdoor Supervision

- Assign zones (slide area, climbers, gates)
- Stand where you can see “runners” and gate exits
- Count before leaving the building and after arriving outside



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Bathroom/Toileting Supervision

- Maintain line-of-sight where possible
- Keep group supervised while supporting individual toileting needs
- Use staffing support for busy toileting times

Field Trips / Walks

- Name-to-face count before/after every stop
- Assign lead and rear staff
- Use partner system for school-age

Common Supervision Problems (and Fixes)

Problem: “Blind spots” behind shelves/centers

Fix: Lower shelves, rotate layout, move staff position.

Problem: Staff stuck doing tasks instead of supervising

Fix: Prep ahead (diaper supplies, snack setup), split roles.

Problem: Too much time spent waiting in transitions

Fix: transition jobs + songs + small waiting activities.



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Problem: One staff covering the whole playground

Fix: zone supervision + reduce high-risk access + stagger groups (if allowed).

Quick Self-Check

Ask yourself:

- Can I see every child right now? If not, move.
- Do I know my count? If not, count.
- Am I close enough to prevent unsafe behavior? If not, reposition.
- Are high-risk areas covered? If not, assign zones.
- Are transitions organized? If not, slow down and reset roles.



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