

Marlie, a member of FCCI, is a model for organization. She IS the Martha Stewart of organization. Here is a listing of some simple ways to make life easier.

Arts and Crafts

Child's Preschool Box Each child has their own "school" supply box for Preschool time. In the box there are crayons, a pencil, colored pencils, stick glue, bottle glue, and scissors. I customize the box for the child, so if the child needs the fatter crayons, that is what is in their box. Once a child turns 3, I give them scissors, so if the child is under 3 there are no scissors in the box and so forth. The box is also the color they are assigned to in my daycare, so they know which box belongs to them.

General Tips

RecordKeeping I use the Redleaf Press Calendar Keeper and set aside an hour each week to work on daycare recordkeeping. At the end of the year, my daycare records are organized and ready for the accountant.

No Shoes We don't wear shoes in my home. To organize all the shoes, I put a shoe "cubby" organizer in the bottom of the foyer closet. The kids come in, take off their shoes and put them away. Pairs stay together and there are no more lost shoes and it looks neat!

Coats I installed a coat rack on the inside of our foyer closet door. This is placed at child level and each hook is designated for a child using labels. The children are able to hang up their own coats. This is a great way to learn name recognition and responsibility of their own items.

Diaper Changing Area Near the baby changing area, I have a Sterlite 3 drawer container where I have organized the latex gloves, infant/toddler take home notes (with a pen), and diaper ointments, lotions, etc. Everything is handy and hidden in the container so it looks neat and orderly.

Toy Organization I am fortunate enough to have a toy room where we installed many shelves. Toys are organized in Sterlite containers with the lids on and are stacked in 2s on the shelves (i.e., legos in a box, barbies in a box, doll stuff in a box, Mr. & Mrs. Potato Head in a box, and so forth) . I have one shelf for those "loose" toys that don't go in a box (i.e., play telephone, stackable rings, shapes container, etc.). On that "loose" toys shelf there is only 7-8 toys out. I store the rest away to be rotated every 6-8 weeks. I allow 2 boxes out at a time and the "loose" toys no limit. This makes clean-up time easy for the kids as they don't have "everything" out and they know where everything goes. Clean-up time takes less than 10 minutes.

Kitchen Idea Keep some infant toys in a kitchen drawer. This is handy for giving infants a quick toy when they are in the high chair or crawling around the floor.

Color Coding Each child is assigned a color in my daycare. For instance, Nicole is Purple. She has the purple washcloth that is used during cleanup after meals, she gets

the purple glass to drink out of, she gets the purple preschool supply box, and her Journal notebook has a purple cover. This has simplified trying to remember who was who for that day, arguing amongst the kids about what color they want, and it's easier when I have a substitute. All the kids know what color they are and they know each other's color.

Books There are 3 locations of children's books in my home. One is upstairs where the kids can look at books while I'm cooking lunch. Another is in the reading area of the daycare room. Thirdly, there are the books I want to keep nice and these are used for Preschool Time. The "preschool" books are organized by the alphabet and they are put into magazine files. For instance, I have a box labeled with A. All the book titles that start with A are in this box and so forth. I also have on my computer a listing of my "preschool" books. So when I order new books, I can quickly look at that list to see if I already have that particular book. Since organizing the books in this manner, I'm able to quickly pull out the book I need.

Group Time

Circle Time Preschool Board I purchased a 48" x 36" corrugated Presentation Board (ABC Zone \$4.99). I display the calendar, number of the month, shape of the month, alphabet letters of the month, and color of the month. Everything I need for Circle Time is on this board and the board can go anywhere. When I'm finished, it folds closed and I slide it behind the playhouse.

Meals

Grocery Lists I have 6 weeks of menus planned which I then rotate throughout my food program year. For each menu, I have a grocery list that goes with it. I went through the menu for the week and wrote down everything I would need including butter, ketchup, etc. I then put the items in order of where they are located in the grocery store and typed this onto the computer. I do this for each of the 6 weeks. Each week, I print off the grocery list. I cross off anything that is not needed and I'm able to add those "extras" for the family. By taking the time to do this, I'm not wasting time making up the grocery list (for the same items that I'll purchase in 6 weeks!) PLUS I can now leave my house, go get groceries, and get back home in under 1 hour.