

Handwashing Tips

3 items involve hand washing: # 10, #12, and #13.

These 3 items frequently receive scores of 1 because of three frequent problems associated with handwashing.

1. **Incorrect Handwashing Procedures:** The most frequent problem is that teachers and children do NOT use the correct hand washing procedure. Usually, teachers/children first get soap on hands and then wet hands. This is **incorrect**. You must **get hands wet first**, then get soap. (Hand washing is less effective when soap is put on hands before hands are wet). See below for appropriate procedure.
 - a. Moisten hands with warm water, then use liquid soap.
 - b. Rub hands together for **20 seconds**. (e.g., Sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” twice or count to 20 or count to 10 in English and then count to ten in Spanish, etc.)

NOTE: All About ECERS says to wash hands for 10 seconds. But a recent clarification from the author has raised the time required to wash hands from 10 seconds to 20 seconds.
 - c. Rinse hands free of soap under running water.
 - d. Dry hands with a clean, disposable paper towel or air dry with a blower. **NOTE:** Air dryers without automatic sensor should be turned on using elbow, etc. (but not clean hands).
 - e. Avoid recontamination when turning off faucets. For example, turn off faucets with paper towel, elbow, etc. (not hands).

TIP: In some situations, teachers might find it easier to prevent faucet-related contamination by turning the water on, leaving it on until all children have washed their hands, and then turning the faucet off (teacher).
 - f. Throw the used paper towel into a trashcan. **NOTE:** Make sure that children do not recontaminate their hands when throwing away the paper towel by touching the trash can lid.

2. **Recontamination of clean hands:** The second most frequent issue is that children recontaminate their hands after washing hands **BEFORE** meals/snacks. Examples of ways children recontaminate their hands before meals/snacks include:
 - a. turning off the faucet with their clean hands instead of a paper towel
 - b. touching the automatic sensors at the sink (after washing their hands)
 - c. turning on hand air dryers by touching the “on” button with clean hands (use elbows instead)
 - d. touching lid of trash can as they throw away paper towels
 - e. touching the walls/floors in the bathroom as they stand in line waiting for other children to finish washing their hands
 - f. touching objects (e.g., backpacks, coats, toys) after they wash their hands before they eat

NOTE: A recent ECERS clarification from the author makes it ok to use hand sanitizer (see below). We strongly encourage teachers to use hand sanitizer when children arrive at the cafeteria. If you use hand sanitizer, make sure they “wash hands” thoroughly by rubbing sanitizer in between their fingers, on backs of hand, etc.

3. **Hands not washed at appropriate times:** The 3rd frequent problem is that children/teachers do not wash their hands at appropriate times. This is most frequently an issue with item # 13 (Health Practices). Pay close attention to times that hands should be washed (see AAE page 124-125):
 - Upon arrival in the classroom; when re-entering classroom after outdoor play
 - Before and after messy play (e.g., painting, playdough) and sand/water play
 - After dealing with bodily fluids (e.g., blood, running noses, sneezes, coughs) or making significant skin contact (e.g., applying lotions, sunscreen, medications)
 - After touching contaminated objects (e.g., trashcan lids, the floor, pets, etc.)

It is ok (and a good idea) to put up reminder signs about hand washing (e.g., put a sign about handwashing at the water/sand table, etc.). See author's clarification about use of hand sanitizer below:

Author Clarification regarding the use of hand sanitizer (July, 2011): Handwashing and hand sanitizer use: The 2011 edition of *Caring for Our Children* (page 113) states that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing unless hands are visibly soiled. Use can be by adults and children 2 years of age and older. Therefore the use of hand sanitizers is acceptable when scoring these indicators as long as the product contains 60-95% alcohol, manufacturer's instructions are followed, and very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and to avoid ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. Be sure to check to be sure that the manufacturer's directions for use are followed exactly, because if not, do not give credit for any time when not followed. You should ask to see the original container with directions for use, if it is not observable. If children are not closely supervised when using the sanitizer, consider in supervision-related indicators for the item specifically, and also in Safety and Supervision.

If hands are visibly dirty, handwashing, according to the required procedure is still required, although the time for rubbing soapy hands together before rinsing is changed to 20 seconds rather than the original 10 seconds. Antibacterial soaps should not be used. Children using shared art or sensory materials must wash hands, or use hand sanitizer according to directions, both before and after use.

Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

Recommendation: Read the following pages in *All About ECERS*:

#10 Meals/snacks: pages 89-101

#12 Toileting/diapering: pages 111-122

#13 Health practices: pages 123-133

NOTE: All About ECERS says to wash hands for 10 seconds. But a recent clarification from the author has raised the time required to wash hands from 10 seconds to 20 seconds.

DIAPERING AND HANDWASHING

Diapering Procedure

1. Before beginning the diapering procedure, clean your hands by using proper hand hygiene (handwashing or use of hand sanitizer according to directions).
2. To minimize contamination, prepare for diapering by getting out all of the supplies needed for the diaper change and placing them near, **but not on**, the diapering surface, for example:
 - Enough wipes for the diaper change, including cleaning the child's bottom and wiping the teacher's and child's hands before putting on the clean diaper (wipes must be taken out of their container)
 - A clean diaper
 - A plastic bag for soiled clothes and a set of clean clothes (if soiled clothing is anticipated)
 - Non-porous gloves (if used)
 - A dab of diaper cream on a disposable paper towel (if used)
 - Changing table paper (if used) to cover the table from the child's shoulders to feet (in case it becomes soiled and must be folded over to create a clean surface during the change)
3. Place the child on diapering table. Remove clothing to access diaper. If soiled, place clothes into a plastic bag.
4. Remove soiled diaper and place into a lined, covered, hands-free trash container.
5. Use wipes to clean child's bottom from front to back (one wipe per swipe) and throw away into trash container. The diaper can also be left open under the child during the cleaning step and then discarded with the soiled wipes before continuing with Step 6. If gloves are used, they must be discarded at this time.
6. Use a wipe to remove soil from your hands and throw into trash container.
7. Use another wipe to remove soil from child's hands and throw into trash container.
8. Put on clean diaper and redress the child.
9. Wash the child's hands following the proper handwashing procedure (use of hand sanitizer is also acceptable for children 2 and older). Return the child to the play area without touching any other surfaces.
10. Clean the diapering surface by spraying it with a soapy water solution and drying with a paper towel or by wiping it with a water-saturated paper towel or wipe.
11. Disinfect the diapering surface by spraying it with disinfectant-strength bleach-water solution ($\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ cup bleach per gallon of water) and wait at least 2 minutes before wiping (or allow to air dry). Another EPA approved disinfectant, used according to directions, can be used instead of bleach and water.
12. Clean your hands by using proper hand hygiene (handwashing or use of hand sanitizer according to directions)

Handwashing Procedure

1. Moisten hands with water and use liquid soap.
2. Rub hands together away from the flow of water for 20 seconds.
3. Rinse hands free of soap under running water.
4. Dry hands with a clean, disposable paper towel or air dry with a blower.
5. Turn off faucet using paper towel.
6. Throw the used paper towel into a hands-free trashcan.

TABLE WASHING PROCEDURE

1. To remove gross soil, spray the table (or highchair tray) with a soap-water solution and wipe dry with a disposable paper towel.
2. To sanitize the eating surface, spray the table/tray with bleach-water solution and wait at least 2 minutes before wiping with a disposable towel or allow to air dry, in order to allow the solution to kill germs. The surface cannot be sprayed and immediately wiped.

Additional precautions

- ❖ Sponges should not be used for sanitizing tables because they soak bacteria away from the surface of the sponge, which then cannot be easily reached in the interior of the sponge by the sanitizing agent.
- ❖ If wet cloths are used, a separate cloth is required for each table/tray, and cloths cannot be returned to soak in a bleach-water solution.
- ❖ Food should not be put directly on the table or highchair tray because eating surfaces are more likely to be contaminated than disposable plates or washed and sanitized dishes
- ❖ If highchair trays are used as eating surfaces, the trays should be washed and sanitized in the same way as plates and other food service utensils.
- ❖ In case different children rotate through snack, each place must be cleaned and sanitized between use by different children. Sanitizing solution should not be sprayed while children are seated at the table.

Playground Information to Use with the Environment Rating Scales (revised 10-3-13)

Based on information from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), Public Playground Safety Handbook, Pub. No. 325, information from the American Society for Testing and Materials Standards (ASTM), Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Public Use Playground Equipment for Children 6 Months through 23 Months, F 2373-05, and information from ASTM Standard Safety Performance Specification for Fences/Barriers for Public, Commercial, and Multi-Family Residential Use Outdoor Play Areas, F2049. These guidelines are a basic overview of areas to review when scoring playground and safety items in the ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, or SACERS. This list is not to be used as a comprehensive guide for playground assessment.

Fall Zones – A fall zone is the area around and under gross motor climbing, sliding, or swinging equipment where protective surfacing is required to prevent injury from falls. The fall zone should be cleared of items that children may fall onto or run into.

Protective Surfacing – Protective surfacing is intended to cushion falls and prevent serious injuries from any equipment used indoors and outdoors. The amount of a consistent type of surfacing required is based on the fall height of the equipment, which is the height of the highest designated play surface on the equipment. Equipment having a fall height of 18" or less is not required to have protective surfacing; however, no equipment should be placed over concrete, asphalt, stone, ceramic tile, or similar hard surfaces. The surfaces under and around play equipment should be soft enough to cushion falls, which are the most frequent causes of injuries on playgrounds. Common indoor surfaces (such as rugs, tumbling mats, or carpet) and common outdoor surfaces (such as grass or dirt) are not adequate cushioning for gross motor equipment with a fall height greater than 18" even when the equipment is not anchored. For specifics on surfacing depth for different loose-fill materials, see the chart below. When the surfacing in much-used areas becomes displaced (e.g., under swings, at slide exits), it should be raked back or replaced to maintain correct depth. For poured or installed foam or rubber surfaces, the materials must meet the ASTM F1292 requirements, which can be verified through a written statement from the manufacturer.

Minimum compressed loose-fill surfacing depths:

Inches	Of	Loose-Fill Material	Protects To	Fall Height (feet)
6		Shredded/recycled rubber		10
9		Sand		4
9		Pea gravel		5
9		Wood mulch		7
9		Wood chips		10

Equipment Spacing – Fall zones for climbing equipment should extend at least 6 ft on all sides for preschoolers and school-agers and at least 3 ft on all sides for infants and toddlers. Spacing between pieces of equipment must allow children to circulate around or fall from play structures without striking another structure, and permit adults to have easy access to the children who are using the equipment. For preschoolers (2 – 5 years) and school-agers (5 – 12 years), adjacent play structures, with a play surface over 30" high, should be spaced at least 9 ft. apart. If the play surfaces of both structures are 30" high or less, the equipment may be located a minimum of 6 ft. apart. For infants and toddlers (6 – 23 months), play structures with surfaces between 18" and 32" high must be spaced at least 3 ft. apart. Moving pieces of equipment (e.g., swings, merry-go-rounds) should be located in an area away from other play structures so children have adequate room to pass from one play area to another without being struck by moving equipment, and their fall zones should not overlap the fall zone of other equipment.

Requirements for Fences – Fences surrounding a playground must completely enclose the play space and measure at least 48" high, and the latches of access gates should measure at least 48" high. To prevent children from passing through the fence, the vertical members of the fence should be spaced 4" apart or less. A discrete barrier, such as structural bollards, trees, or posts, should be placed along any side of the playground which is within 30 feet of streets or parking lots, to prevent a vehicle from accidentally entering the space.

Age-appropriate equipment provides children with opportunities to safely practice gross motor skills without putting them at risk for unnecessary injury. Appropriate equipment for each age group is listed below:

Infant/Toddler: 6 – 23 months	Preschool: Ages 2 – 5	School-age: Ages 5 – 12
Climbing equipment up to 32" high	Climbing equipment up to 60" high	Climbing equipment up to 84" high
Ramps	Horizontal ladders and overhead rings 60" high or less for 4-5 year-olds	Arch climbers Free standing flexible climbers
Single file step ladders	Merry-go-rounds	Stairways
Slides	Ramps	Chain or cable walks
Spiral slides less than 360°	Rung ladders	Fulcrum seesaws
Spring rockers	Single file step ladders	Ladders- horizontal (84" high), rung, and step
Stairways	Slides	Overhead rings up to 84" high
Swings with full bucket seats	Spiral slides up to 360°	Merry-go-rounds
Ramps	Spring rockers	Ring treks
Single file step ladders	Stairways	Slides
	Swings- belt, full bucket (2-4 yrs.), and rotating tire	Spiral slides more than one 360° turn Vertical sliding poles
	Balance beams up to 12" high	Swings- belt and rotating tire
		Track rides
		Balance beams up to 16" high

The following equipment is **not appropriate** for any age group: trampolines, swinging gates, giant strides, climbing ropes not secured at both ends, animal figure swings, multiple occupancy swings, rope swings, and swinging dual exercise rings and trapeze bars.

In addition to equipment listed above, the following equipment is **not appropriate** for preschool children (ages 2-5): freestanding arch climbers, dome climbers, freestanding flexible climbers, fulcrum seesaws, log rolls, track rides, spiral slides more than one 360° turn, parallel bars, and vertical sliding poles. Horizontal ladders and overhead rings are not appropriate for children 3 years and younger.

In addition to the equipment listed above, the following equipment is *not appropriate* for infants and toddlers (6 – 23 months): rung ladders, merry-go-rounds, rotating tire swings, spiral slides with a full 360° turn, balance beams.

Requirements for slides:

For preschool and school-age: The exit region of slides should be at least 11" long. The exit height of slides up to 4 ft. high should be 11" or less, and the exit height of slides over 4 ft. high should be at least 7" but not more than 15". The fall zone around slides should be at least 6 ft on all sides, except at the slide's exit. For slides up to 6 ft. high, the fall zone at the exit should be at least 6 ft. For slides greater than 6 ft., the fall zone at the exit should be at least as long as the slide is high up to 8 ft. max. The fall zone at a slide's exit should not overlap the fall zone of any other equipment.

For infants and toddlers: The exit region of slides should be 7" – 10" long, and the exit height should be 6" or less. The fall zone around slides should be at least 3 ft., except at the slide's exit, which should be at least 6 ft. The fall zone at a slide's exit should not overlap the fall zone of any other equipment.

Requirements for swings:

For preschool and school-age: **Belt swings** should have a pivot point of 8 ft. or less. There should be no more than 2 swings located within a single swing bay. The distance between swings at rest within a single bay should be at least 24", and the distance between a swing at rest and its support structure should be at least 30" (measured 5 ft. from the ground). The seat of swings for preschool-age children should rest at least 12" inches from the ground, and the seat of swings for school-age children should rest at least 16" from the ground. The fall zone for single-axis swings is 2 times the distance from the pivot point to the ground, both in front and back of swings, and cannot overlap the fall zone of any other equipment. A 6 ft. fall zone is required from the perimeter of the supporting structure. **Tire swings** should not be attached to composite structures and should not be suspended from a structure with other swings in the same bay. The bottom of the seat of the tire swing should rest at least 12" from the ground. The clearance between the seat and the sides of the support structure should be 30" when the tire is held in its closest position to the support structure. The fall zone for tire swings is the distance from the pivot point to the top of the tire plus 6 ft. in all directions, and should not overlap the fall zone of any other equipment. A 6 ft. fall zone is required from the perimeter of the tire swing's supporting structure.

For infants and toddlers: **Belt swings** should have a pivot point of 47" or less, and the seat should rest at least 6" from the ground. The fall zone for single-axis swings is 2 times the distance from the pivot point to the ground, both in front and back of swings and cannot overlap with the fall zone of any other equipment. A 3 ft. fall zone is required from the perimeter of the supporting structure. **Bucket swings** should have a pivot point between 47" and 95", and the seat should rest at least 24" from the ground. The fall zone for bucket swings is 2 times the distance from the pivot point to the bottom of the swing seat, both in front and back of swings and cannot overlap the fall zone of any other equipment. For both types of swings, there should be no more than 2 swings located within a single swing bay, and the distance between swings at rest within a single bay or between a swing at rest and its support structure should be at least 20" (measured 5 ft. from the ground).

Entanglement Hazards – There should be no dangerous pieces of hardware, such as protruding bolts or open S-hooks on swings that could entangle children's clothing, particularly drawstrings on the hoods of jackets or sweatshirts, and cause strangulation. An S-hook is considered closed if there is no gap or space greater than .04" (about the thickness of a dime).

Entrapment Hazards – Children can get trapped and strangle in openings in which they can fit their bodies but not their heads through the space. A completely bounded opening that is not bounded by the ground may pose an entrapment hazard. Even openings that are low enough for children's feet to touch the ground still present a strangulation risk because young children may not have the cognitive ability or motor skills to free themselves. Openings in guardrails and spaces between platforms, ladder rungs, and uprights in protective barriers on climbing equipment that measure more than 3.5" but less than 9" may be an entrapment hazard. Head and torso templates from the CPSC Handbook should be used to determine whether an opening presents an entrapment risk. Children can also become entrapped by angles (less than 55°) formed between 2 sides of playground parts, for instance at the top of a wooden picket fence or fort.

Pinch, Crush, and Shearing Hazards – Moving pieces of equipment, such as suspension bridges, track rides, merry-go-rounds, or seesaws, should not have accessible moving parts that might pinch or crush a child's finger or other body part.

Protrusion Hazards – There should be no sharp points, corners, or edges (either wooden or metal) on play equipment or other objects in the space (e.g., fences, gates) that could cut or puncture a child's skin. Protruding bolts on fences, gates, or equipment should not expose more than 2 threads.

Guardrails – A guardrail is an enclosing device around an elevated platform that is intended to prevent inadvertent falls from the platform. A child might be able to climb over, under, or through the guardrail. For preschoolers, guardrails are required for platforms higher than 20", and up to 30" above the ground. For preschoolers, the top edge of the guardrails should be at least 29" from the platform, and the lower edge should be between 9" and 23" from the platform. For equipment used *only* by school-aged children, any platform more than 30" above the ground (but not over 48" above the ground) will need guardrails at least 38" above the platform, with the lower edge between 9" and 28" from the platform.

Protective Barriers – A protective barrier is an enclosing device around an elevated platform that is intended to prevent both inadvertent falls from the platform and deliberate attempts to pass through the barrier. No child should be able to climb over, under, or through the barrier. For infants and toddlers, protective barriers are required for all equipment with play surfaces over 18", and the top surface of the barrier should be at least 24". For preschoolers, protective barriers are required for platforms that are over 30" above the ground, and the top surface of the barrier should be at least 29" above the platform. For equipment used *only* by school-aged children, any platform more than 48" above the ground requires protective barriers, and the top surface of the protective barrier must be at least 38" high. Guardrail and barrier recommendations do not apply if they would interfere with the intended use of the equipment, such as stepping up to the next level. For example, platforms that are layered on equipment, (e.g., one platform leading up to another in a step-like manner), do not need guardrails or barriers if the fall height between levels is 7" or less for toddlers, 20" or less for preschoolers, and 30" or less for school-agers.