Galileo® Pre-K Online
Creating Interest Centers for Preschool Learning

Contents

ENVIRONMENT IS KEY

The creation of a positive educational environment is a powerful tool for learning. Preschool teachers have long been aware of this fact, as is evidenced by a visit to their classrooms. Bright colors, child-sized furniture, and children's work displayed on every wall tell children that the classroom is their place, and that good things are about to happen there. The classroom ecology, design of the classroom, and the resources made available to children, provide the foundation for the learning experience. As with all foundations, they need to be carefully and soundly built. A rich learning environment leads to rich learning opportunities. As a preschool teacher, you are challenged to create a learning environment that provides both flexible learning opportunities and the structure and routine preschool children thrive on. Learning occurs in multiple contexts, in large groups and small, one-on-one with you or in an informal peer teaching situation, indoors and outdoors. It occurs during quiet, individual activities or noisy group activities, and is affected by the five senses, by learning styles, and by inclination. How should you accommodate all of these demands simultaneously in a single classroom? The answer is in a particular kind of learning center – the **interest center**.

Interest centers provide a flexible learning environment, accommodating groups of all sizes, individual interests, and needs. When you design quality interest centers for children you are able to provide a variety of meaningful learning experiences simultaneously for children to choose from within a structured environment. By building meaningful learning experiences directly into the classroom environment, you will make learning a natural, comfortable, and fun part of the school day. Learning opportunities abound, and surround the children.

Designing your classroom environment around different centers where children can work alone or in groups of different sizes provides the social context in which children can learn not only in academic knowledge areas, but also develop their interpersonal skills. As children play together, they often learn from one another. The preschool years, in particular, are marked by a significant increase in social interaction. While playing can sometimes produce conflict, it also can encourage cooperation. You can promote cognitive development during the preschool years by providing children with many opportunities for social interaction and cooperative learning. The number and kind of interest centers you choose is limited only by your imagination. Some examples of centers are:

- Art
- Computer
- Cooking
- House and Dramatic Play
- Library
- Music and Movement
- Nature and Science

- Sand and Water
- Table Toys/Blocks and Building
- Writing

Each center can be designed to promote not only cognitive development, but also social, physical, and self-help skills. Tips for creating interest centers in your classroom, as well as some helpful materials lists to get you started are below.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The first major step is planning the interest centers that will support your lesson plans during the program year. Initially, you will be guided by the:

1. required domains of learning
2. space available
3. resources on hand

Furthermore, your choice of centers and their contents will be informed by the:

1. children in your class
2. thematic elements you intend to address
3. age-appropriateness
4. safety concerns

Once you've made some decisions about the centers you wish to create, you may want to evaluate them before unveiling them to the children, and you'll want to continue to reevaluate them as time goes on. Consider the following questions:

- Does the center reflect cultural diversity?
- Is the center accessible to my students with disabilities? Are there accommodations I need to make to support these students?
- What are the developmental levels of the children who will be using the centers?
- What are goals will be explored by children in each interest center?
- Can the children handle the materials?
- Will the materials interest the children?
- Will the projects and materials in the center challenge them?

- In what ways will I participate in the center along with the children?

MATERIALS

Materials and activities in the centers should reflect different cultural backgrounds and should be appropriate to the developmental levels of the children. Activities having a narrow range of difficulty (either too easy or too difficult) are likely to bore some children and frustrate others. Provide activities and projects that allow each child to participate comfortably, complete the activity, and experience a feeling of success and self-confidence.

SAFETY

As you create your interest centers, keep health and safety in mind. Make sure materials in your interest centers are in good condition and are safe and strong enough to be used on a regular basis by the children. Consider including toys that are easy to clean and disinfect regularly. Keep an eye out for toys that have become dangerous through disrepair— sharp edges and loose parts that may be swallowed…

CLASSROOM ECOLOGY

Multiple interest centers in a single classroom can be created by defining the separate areas using signage and physical boundaries. Physical boundaries can be created with shelves, furniture, floor coverings of different textures, and even different colored tape. It's important to be mindful of the placement of the centers within the room to provide the most conducive environment for the learning activity. For example, it would be distracting to a child trying to read in the library center if the music and movement center right next to it is filled with three other children banging on tambourines and drums. Therefore, it's best to separate the quieter activities from the noisy, so that each can be engaged in without infringing on other children's needs. Activities requiring water or clean-up should be located closer to the sink. Consider designing each center as an oasis where the child has the resources, space, and ambience best suited to the maximum exploration and enjoyment of the activity.

Interest centers should be inviting, cozy, and easy to find and use. It is important that learning be a natural and comfortable process for children, and interest centers should reflect that. How? Interest centers should accommodate children's size, hands, interests, backgrounds, and level of development. Materials should be reachable and easily manipulated. Each center should have a variety of materials, and should be neatly organized. Storage boxes should be labeled with a word and a picture, and clear plastic boxes are even better, as children can see what is inside. Children's work should be posted at their eye-level, rather than the teacher's. It is important to preschoolers to be able to "do it themselves;" therefore, consider the furnishings and materials you provide from their perspective. Children are more likely to take learning initiative and to explore, if you make it easy for them to do so.

Learning Styles

The children in your class will represent many different learning styles. The Galileo Pre-K Online Curriculum introduces learning opportunities targeting the same or similar skills each week across multiple interest centers. This is done to foster learning in each child through supporting the many learning styles which may be represented in your classroom. Well-designed interest centers with an integrated curriculum, such as the Galileo Pre-K Online Curriculum, will support you in providing learning opportunities in a variety of approaches to learning which will allow each child to thrive.

All children should be provided with a balanced selection of learning opportunities which facilitate learning through multiple learning styles. It can be helpful to understand different learning styles as you develop your lesson plans. This can ensure you are preparing a weekly lesson plan which will provide balanced learning opportunities.

The following represent learning styles which you may see in the classroom:

- **Auditory** – Auditory learners will learn well during activities utilizing music and sound.
- **Kinesthetic** – Kinesthetic learners may also be called physical learners. These children will gravitate towards activities which use their body, hands and senses.
- **Logical** – Logical learners use logic and reasoning in their learning activities.
- **Social** – A social learner will do well in small and large group activities where they have the chance to work with other children. This is often called the interpersonal learning style.
- **Solitary** – The solitary learning style is also known as intrapersonal. Intrapersonal learners tend to like to work on individual activities and be self-directed.
- **Verbal** – Children who gravitate toward verbal learning opportunities may prefer using words, both spoken and written.
- **Visual** – Visual learners may prefer activities using pictures, images and spatial activities.

The Teacher's Role

Once the children begin using the centers your evaluation process will continue as you monitor the children's use of the centers.

- Are the children using each center for the purpose you intended?
- Is there enough space available for each center?

- Would you like to add additional materials or take away current materials?
- Do you see any problems children consistently face as they participate in each center?
- Do you see any consistent successes in each center?
- Are there some centers the children prefer over others? Why? Could modifying the layout or location of a center make it more appealing to the children?

You may find that your house corner is just as often becoming a store, and you would like to add more resources to the "store" theme. Just as you are constantly observing the children and adjusting learning opportunities to meet their needs, you will be observing how they interact in the learning environment, and making changes to the interest centers.

Learning is facilitated when teachers are available to scaffold activities for children, to provide assistance when needed, to model skills, behaviors, and appropriate ways of dealing with others. Teachers can offer encouragement of all kinds as children expand their horizons. Be active and interactive. Children need more from you than simply organizing the room, letting them play, and trouble-shooting. You are their teacher. They want you to learn with them, help them, and take pride in their accomplishments. Take time to talk with children during activities. By being available to children as they learn, teachers can help them feel increased confidence in new situations. This allows them they to learn and practice independent learning skills with a supportive teacher presence.

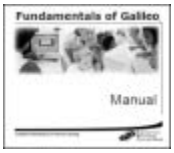
Encourage cooperation in the centers. No doubt the material resources available to you are not as unlimited as your imagination. Consequently, it is important that children learn to share materials and take turns. Cooperation is easier for children when the number of children in the center at any given time is small, when they know each other's names, and when they are familiar with each other. If you are assigning children to interest center groups, try to maintain the group composition for at least a week before changing it. You can encourage cooperation by providing children with projects to complete together. Also, when you model sharing and turn- taking, children come to know what is expected of them.

Center Construction Ideas and Suggested Materials

The construction of interest centers and the selection of their contents are crucial. You are designing the learning environment. You may find it helpful to relate some of the centers to a common theme each week. Themes might relate to a holiday; an aspect of the community; a knowledge area such as plants, animals, storytelling, and so on. Having real material examples that children could encounter brings the learning closer to a child's real-life experiences, making the classroom activities more meaningful, and therefore, more valuable. If you build centers based on thematic elements, you will probably want to change the theme on a regular basis. Your observations of children's development will help you determine

when to change the theme or knowledge area. Below are a variety of common interest centers, materials lists for each, and helpful hints to get you started. However, interest centers may grow and evolve based on many factors, not the least of which is your interest, and that of the children. Experiment with different resources, placement, and themes until you find what is comfortable for you and the children.

Additionally, the Galileo G3 Curriculum Activities and Storyteller Activities are designed to be easily implemented within an interest center design. The majority of the activities are small-group and large-group activities, many of which lend themselves to children's individual exploration within the various centers after their introduction. If the classroom interest centers are supplied with the materials listed below, teachers will have the materials necessary to complete most of the Galileo G3 Activities. Some activities will require perishable materials or specific storybooks which are not included in this document.



Teachers are encouraged to inventory their classroom using the Galileo G3 Activity Materials Checklist prior to implementing the Galileo G3 Curriculum. A checklist to aid programs in implementing Galileo Pre-K Online is provided in the "Galileo Pre-K Online Curriculum Guidebook".

A complete list of storybooks included either as required or suggested readings for any of the Galileo G3 Activities is provided in the appendix of the "Galileo Pre-K Online Curriculum Guidebook", online help files, and in the Galileo Pre-K Professional Development Forum.

ART INTEREST CENTER

The Art Interest Center should include a variety of resources that allows children to create a variety of different art projects. Art activities in the Galileo Pre-K Online Curriculum encourage the development of not only the skills included in the Visual Arts knowledge area of the Galileo G3 Creative Arts Scale, but across the curriculum. You can encourage curiosity and creativity by providing many opportunities to produce art, and a non-judgmental environment in which to display it. Art activities offer children opportunities to learn about shape, color, texture, composition, most importantly, self-expression. You can use the art center to help children learn important skills in multiple domains, for example, cause and effect (mixing colors to make a new one), naming and labeling objects, making up stories, planning ahead, and math (such as counting paintbrushes to hand out among children).

The art center should include tables and chairs located near a sink and away from carpet if possible.

ART INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Art books

- Butcher paper
- Cellophane paper in blue and green (colored cling wrap is not a good substitute)
- Chalk, Chalkboards
- Collage materials
- Colored pencils
- Coloring books
- Construction paper in a variety of sizes and colors
- Cotton swabs, cotton balls
- Crayons
- Decorative materials: sequins, feathers, confetti, googly eyes, glitter, felt scraps, ribbon, lace, tissue paper
- Drawing paper
- Easels
- Easter grass
- Egg cartons
- Glue, glue sticks
- Hole punch
- Index cards
- Large pencils
- Magazines, catalogs, newspaper or pictures printed from online sources to use for collage
- Modeling clay
- Newspapers, including advertisements
- Packing peanuts
- Paint supplies including brushes, trays, paint holders, paint (tempura or watercolor, finger paints).
- Paper bags
- Paper for painting
- Paper towels
- Plastic cups for storing
- Play dough
- Play dough
- Polystyrene cups
- Popsicle sticks
- Ribbon of various colors and textures
- Rubber bands
- Safety scissors
- Sewing items
- Smocks
- Sponges
- Stamps, Stamp pads (black, red, blue)

- Stapler
- Star Stickers
- Straws
- Streamers
- Styrofoam
- Tape: Masking tape, double sided tape, packing tape
- Thread
- Tinsel
- Tooth picks
- Water-based markers
- Wrapping paper
- Yarn

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT INTEREST CENTER

Music and movement are important avenues for expression, which is why the Galileo G3 Activity Library includes many activities to promote children's development in this area. Music in particular helps children develop their listening skills, learn new words, and understand cause and effect. Typically, you will want children to sing as a group. Many children are just learning to carry a tune at this age; when they sing together, they will have the opportunity to learn to sing on pitch in a setting where off-pitch sounds may not be conspicuous. Choosing songs that tell a story will help children learn that music expresses thoughts and feelings. For example, you may wish to have children talk about the feelings that the music brings up for them. You will find that the children enjoy songs that have movement associated with them. These songs help children not only to express themselves but also provide a way to develop a sense of rhythm and to learn to follow directions. You may want the children to play as well as sing. Playing a simple musical instrument helps children acquire the knowledge that they can perform. Moreover, it may stimulate later interest in learning to play an instrument.

MUSIC AND MOVEMENT INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Bells
- Musical instruments such as percussion (drums, rhythm sticks, bells, other noisemakers), strings, woodwind, and brass
- Hula hoops
- Full-length unbreakable mirror
- Books of children's songs and dances
- Recordings of different types of music
- Music and songs from different cultures and countries
- Music player (mp3, CD, tape or record player)
- Earphones

NATURE AND SCIENCE INTEREST CENTER

A young child is a natural scientist, constantly experimenting to learn more about the world. The skills of a scientist — observation, prediction, classification, explanation, and hypothesis testing — are used by the child in all aspects of learning and in all learning centers. You can assist young children to develop their knowledge of the world by encouraging them to use the scientist's tools, the tools of scientific method that make up the knowledge areas of the Galileo G3 Science and Nature Scale.

The most basic of these is observation. Observation provides the facts that the scientist tries to explain. You can encourage observations skills by elaborating on the children's responses to questions that you ask about the physical and natural world in ways that promote attention to detail.

Another important tool of science is classification. Classification enables the child to interpret what s/he sees. You can have children classify things based on their size, texture, color, shape, use, and composition.

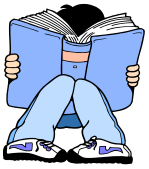
The ability to predict helps us to explain why things happen and gives us a degree of control over the future; prediction is a higher-order thinking skill you want to encourage. You can encourage children to make predictions by asking "What will happen if/next?" questions. In addition to prediction, explanation of those predictions is important as well. Give children opportunities to explain their predictions as well as events in general. When they do, be sure to show respect and support for what they say. This will encourage them to tell you what they really think. You can encourage children to explain things by asking "Why do you think this happened?" and "What happened?" questions. Whenever possible, give children the opportunity to test their predictions. Testing hypotheses, a key component of scientific method, is one of the child's most important ways of acquiring new knowledge. As children test and confirm or disprove their hypotheses they reshape their thinking and develop a deepening understanding of the world in which they live.

NATURE AND SCIENCE INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Abacus
- Balance scale
- Balls, red, green and blue
- Beans
- Board games
- Bubbles and bubble wands
- Clock
- Different kinds of plants
- Display shelves for science projects
- Dominos
- Leaves
- Magnets
- Materials that can be stacked, such as blocks of different sizes

- Measuring tools
- Picture books on nature and science
- Puzzles with 4-6 pieces
- Rocks
- Scent jars filled with different scents
- Seeds
- Shapes and weights for sorting
- Shells
- Small table and chairs
- Tape measure
- Things to measure
- Toys with moveable parts that can be taken apart
- Writing materials

LIBRARY INTEREST CENTER



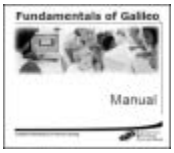
Young children love stories just as they love songs. They will often implore you to read their favorite stories over and over. If you try to skip ahead so that you can go on to another activity, you can be sure they will notice. It is important to encourage this interest in words, books, and literacy in general; the continuing exercise of literacy skills, and ultimately, the ability to read, is one of the key determinants of later school success, and it all starts during story time in school and on the lap of a parent with a favorite book. Children may learn many things during story time that will help them to learn to read later on. For example, a child will learn to distinguish print from scribble and to know that you can read print. The child may also learn to hold a book right-side-up, that we read from top to bottom, and that we read English from left to right. The knowledge areas of the Galileo G3 Language and the Galileo G3 Literacy Scales are addressed directly by the experiences children have in the Library Center.

Storytelling is a wonderful activity for helping children develop higher-order thinking skills, such as making predictions. It is fun for them to use their imaginations in this way, and it helps them to learn to anticipate possible future occurrences. Children can also learn about cause and effect relations in a story activity.

One of the best ways for children to learn about stories is to create their own. Initially, storytelling often takes the form of relating a personal experience. You can build on children's desire to share their experiences by encouraging them to make a picture story. Always encourage each child to share what happened in the beginning, what happened next, and how the story ends.

Making picture stories teaches children many things. For example, they develop their artistic skills. In addition, they may learn that stories have a beginning, middle, and end. Most importantly, they learn to take pride in their creative accomplishments. It is important to teach children to write stories as well as to tell

them. Scribbling is one of the first ways in which children learn that you can communicate through writing. As development progresses, the child may learn to make letters and to associate them with letter sounds. In this way writing can play an important role in the future development of reading skills. Giving children lots of different kinds of opportunities to write can further promote literacy. For example, children may write thank you notes, grocery lists, or cards. By writing for different purposes, children learn the many ways in which writing can be used to communicate.



A complete list of storybooks included either as required or suggested readings for any of the Galileo G3 Activities is provided in the appendix of the "Galileo Pre-K Online Curriculum Guidebook". The Galileo G3 Activity Storybook List includes storybooks which may be used in the Galileo G3 Activities or which have been reviewed by Galileo and are recommended for the preschool classroom. This can also be found in the online help and Galileo Pre-K Professional Development Forum.

LIBRARY INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Books on a variety of topics
- Books with simple plots and lots of pictures
- Crayons
- Flannel board
- Good lighting
- Large pillows
- Music player (mp3, cd, tape or record player)
- Open shelves that show the front cover of books
- Paper
- Pencils
- Puppets, especially those with mouths that open and close
- Rotating selection of children's literature
- Small table and chairs
- Soft flooring
- Stuffed animals
- Wall decorations

HOUSE AND DRAMATIC PLAY INTEREST CENTER

The learning possibilities for children in a house corner or other dramatic play area are endless. Dramatic play addresses learning across all domains via the curricular goals of the Galileo G3 Assessment Scales. Dramatic play can help children learn about sorting materials, problem-solving, and cooperation and sharing. By imitating what they see in their world, they practice what they might do in different situations, such as what it might be like to visit the dentist. In this way, children can work out any anxiety these experiences might induce in a safe environment. Dramatic play provides real-

life experience in secure surroundings. Additionally, dramatic play invariably involves cooperative play between children, and it provides many opportunities to try out and expand their social skills.

HOUSE AND DRAMATIC PLAY INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Broom and dustpan and mop
- Cash register
- Chairs, table
- Dishes
- Dolls and doll accessories
- Dress-up clothes
- Food labels
- Grocery or store products/wrappers/empty packages
- Paper and pencils
- Paper grocery bags
- Plastic flowers
- Plastic vases
- Play money
- Play-food (plastic, empty food containers)
- Pots/pan
- Purses, wallets
- Silverware
- Stuffed animals
- Toy phones
- Additional materials as needed for special thematic Dramatic Play areas, such as Doctor/Dentist Office, Garden Shop, Pet Shop, Grocery Store, Post Office, Fire House, etc.

TECHNOLOGY INTEREST CENTER

Technology abounds in our homes, schools, and work. No one doubts that being able to use a computer is an important skill, and many teachers like to provide children with the opportunity to use the computer at school while learning important skills. There is a variety of high-quality children's educational software available for teachers to make available to children. Teachers can access children's educational software via the Internet, or use stand-alone programs. The advantage to downloading Internet software is that both the software and the updates are available through the Internet, eliminating the need for software installation. This allows independent and self-paced exploration of math concepts and literacy skills, among others. The use of the mouse encourages the development of fine motor control as well. It is recommended that teachers preview carefully all software that they intend for children to use and monitor children carefully as they utilize the computer. For teachers who have a single computer in their classroom, one for their use and that of the children, it is important to train children as to what is for their use and what is not. Additionally, software exists that allows teachers to toggle between a

specially created child desktop and their own work programs to allow for maximum security of data and files and minimum frustration of children trying to navigate an adult desktop on their own.

With ATI's Storyteller, the computer center becomes a greater learning tool. Computer-based instructional activities that can be utilized by children alone or by the teacher with a single child or a group of children, teach focused language and literacy lessons that are directly geared to developing the skills included in the knowledge areas of phonological awareness, story reasoning and storytelling, print awareness and concepts, early reading and writing, alphabet knowledge, listening and understanding, and receptive vocabulary. Additionally, children can engage in computer-based assessment activities, the performance information from which is entered directly into the Galileo G3 Language and Galileo G3 Literacy Scales.

TECHNOLOGY INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- One to three computers or laptops available to children
- Internet connection (high-speed recommended)
- Small tables, chairs
- Variety of children's educational software
- Optional: display equipment, via connection hardware to a TV, multiple monitors, or a computer projector
- MP3 player, tablet or other technology devises which children can use with supervision

COOKING INTEREST CENTER

Cooking is something children see adults do every day and it makes them feel grown up to do it themselves. Children can learn helping, sharing, fine motor coordination, counting, sorting, measuring, classification, and prediction, among other skills represented in the Galileo G3 Assessment Scales, when they cook. Be aware that some children may have severe food allergies, always obtain confirmation from families that none of the children in your class are allergic to the ingredients you intend to use in the classroom. It's a good idea to limit cooking activities to small groups and prepare ahead of time to be sure you have all the ingredients and tools you will need. It is also helpful to discuss health and safety issues with the children before you begin a cooking activity. Be extremely cautious when using stoves or hotplates, and always turn pot handles toward the backs of burners and turn stoves and hotplates off as soon as you are done using them.

If you prefer not to use stoves or hotplates with children, or if your center does not have a kitchen, there are still many food preparation activities available for children to enjoy, such as sandwiches and no-bake cookies. By keeping recipes simple, you can engage the children in many enjoyable cooking activities without using a kitchen. Simple cooking activities such as peeling bananas, tearing lettuce, or scrubbing potatoes in preparation for a meal or snack can allow children to feel a sense of accomplishment in helping.

COOKING INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- A variety plastic or metal mixing bowls plastic or metal measuring cups and spoons
- Aluminum foil
- Apple peeler
- Aprons
- Baking pans, baking sheets
- Cookie cutters
- Cream of tartar
- Crock pot
- Dish cleaning brush
- Egg beater
- Flower vase
- Food coloring
- Jars
- Kitchen timer
- Knives, forks, spoons
- Large metal or wooden spoons
- Liquid dish soap
- Muffin pans
- Napkins
- Plastic forks, spoons, knives
- Plates
- Potato masher
- Pots and pans
- Recipe cards with pictures and words
- Rolling pins
- Rubber scrapers
- Small plastic pitchers
- Small table and chairs
- Soup pot
- Spatula
- Spatulas
- Tongs
- Vegetable peelers
- Optional: cooking element for teacher's use only (toaster oven, microwave, hotplate)

TABLE TOYS/BLOCKS AND BUILDING INTEREST CENTER

A Table Toys/Blocks and Building Interest Center provides children with a variety of experiences to use their small motor skills as they explore, experiment, and discover on their own. (Some teachers prefer to have a

block and building center separate from table toys, but we will deal with them as a single entity.) It is important to provide an assortment of toys and other materials that are interesting to children, durable, and safe (no small parts or sharp edges). Ideally, the toys and materials included in the center should be able to be used in more than one way, and encourage children to be creative. For example, blocks could be a house, a castle, a raceway for toy cars; a jack-in-the-box is just a jack-in-the box. While playing with small toys promotes the development of fine motor skills, the table toys area can also be a tool to improving language and literacy skills, as children learn to recognize the labels of the containers holding the toys. Working together to build a tower or sharing toys also gives children opportunities to grow in the social domain. Working individually allows children to develop their personal initiative, goal-setting, and self-monitoring abilities which are addressed in the Galileo G3 Approaches to Learning Scale.

TABLE TOYS/BLOCKS & BUILDING INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Beads and yarn
- Blocks
- Books
- Buttons
- Colored cubes
- Containers for filling
- Cookie-sheet-type tray or shallow box lid for sorting
- Doll house
- Dominos
- Farm set
- Fasteners
- Felt boards
- Finger puppets
- Flannel board
- Lacing
- Legos or other building toys
- Magnets
- Matching games
- Paper, coloring materials
- Pea pods to shell
- Pegboards
- Picture cards
- Plastic cookie cutters
- Plastic magnifying glass
- Play dough
- Puzzles
- Rocks
- Sea shells
- Sewing cards

- Shape sorters
- Snapping, lacing,
- Stacking toys
- Thematic groups of felt cut-outs
- Toy cars, trucks
- Wooden cylinders
- Zipping, buttoning materials

SAND AND WATER PLAY INTEREST CENTER

Children of all ages love to play in the sand, creating mighty fortresses or mud pies. A place to play with sand and water as they fill, dump, pour, and learn about textures is probably best created outside. Children learn basic measurement and estimating skills as they mix, mold, and modify their sand sculptures. Cleaning up after sand and water play offers opportunities to engage in self-care practices as well. Children develop fine motor skills as they physically manipulate both tools and their physical environment.

In cases of space limitations, or for a specific activity, teachers sometimes prefer an indoor sand tray, which can be created with a deep tray that includes sand or other alternative materials and searching tools. This indoor tray should not include water play, especially if you're using a sand alternative. Teachers might use a sand table for a letter treasure hunt, a pretend archaeological dig, or children can practice writing with their fingers in the sand. Several activities in the Storyteller activities library involve sand/salt trays.

SAND AND WATER PLAY INTEREST CENTER BASIC MATERIALS

- Pails
- Pans
- Plastic shovels
- Plastic spoons
- Pouring materials
- Sandy area or sandbox
- Sponges
- Toy vehicles
- Trickling garden hose
- Variety containers for filling

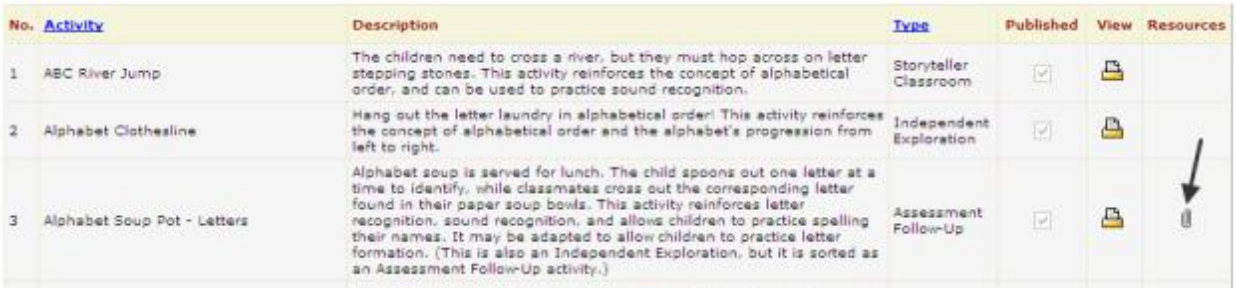
FOR A SAND/SALT TRAY INDOORS

- Deep tray, like a dish pan enough to bury small objects in
- Hand strainer/sifter
- Salt, sand, birdseed, or rice deep
- Slotted spoons
- Spoons

- Tongs
- Tweezers

STORYTELLER CLASSROOM

Although the Storyteller curriculum activities can take place in many different centers, a few more items are needed in order to make your materials list complete, and facilitate the easy implementation of the activities in this library. In addition, you will find that many materials have already been created for you, and are available as downloads attached to each individual activity (noted by a paperclip). All you need to do is click, print, and copy what you need, whenever you need it.



No.	Activity	Description	Type	Published	View	Resources
1	ABC River Jump	The children need to cross a river, but they must hop across on letter stepping stones. This activity reinforces the concept of alphabetical order, and can be used to practice sound recognition.	Storyteller Classroom	☑		
2	Alphabet Clothesline	Hang out the letter laundry in alphabetical order! This activity reinforces the concept of alphabetical order and the alphabet's progression from left to right.	Independent Exploration	☑		
3	Alphabet Soup Pot - Letters	Alphabet soup is served for lunch. The child spoons out one letter at a time to identify, while classmates cross out the corresponding letter found in their paper soup bowls. This activity reinforces letter recognition, sound recognition, and allows children to practice spelling their names. It may be adapted to allow children to practice letter formation. (This is also an Independent Exploration, but it is sorted as an Assessment Follow-Up activity.)	Assessment Follow-Up	☑		

Storyteller curriculum activities assist teachers to implement instructional activities designed to promote the development of language and literacy skills in preschool children. Research indicates that children who have acquired early literacy skills will have many fewer reading problems in elementary school than children who do not have these skills. Research also indicates that failing to give children literacy experiences until they are school age can severely limit the reading and writing levels they ultimately attain. Research on learning to read indicates that the combination of letter knowledge and phonological awareness is critical to the development of fundamental decoding skills necessary for reading. Research has also shown that a language-rich environment providing opportunities for challenging verbal interactions between children and adults promotes the development of language skills necessary for literacy development. We also know that young children develop an awareness of print concepts and knowledge of words through early attempts at writing.

STORYTELLER BASIC MATERIALS

- Bingo markers (16 for each child) such as plastic counters, bottle caps, pennies, etc.
- Classic nursery rhymes, or clusters of rhyming words
- Fabric bag that is not transparent (such as a small, dark-colored pillow case)
- Fishing pole with interchangeable ends: a magnet on the end of the string and a metal end
- Flannel cloth squares (5") for erasing slates (or child- size old socks)
- Flashlights
- Large question mark (approx. 18" long) cut from poster board or laminated construction paper

- Large rubber band
- Large spinner with an arrow in the middle
- Letter Sets: magnetic plastic letters; upper or lowercase alphabet letters (plastic, magnetic, sturdy laminated cardboard letters, or sponge letters) cones or other movable obstacles
- Medium-size soft rubber or foam ball
- Name card with each child's first name on heavy card stock or on a writing strip
- Object Sets: For each letter of the alphabet, you will need a small number of items that begin with the letter sound and that fit into the letter box; Items to place inside the jars such as jellybeans, jacks, marbles, sand, etc.; objects from school or home that all begin with the same letter sound, rhyming objects picture cards--multiple sets (matching, rhyming, activity, simple sight words)
- Pegboards
- Pictures of the children in the class (optional)
- Plastic bags to hold name card and individual letters
- Real jar of an easily recognizable food item - children should be able to read the label (e.g., peanut butter or jelly)
- Shaving cream (optional)
- Shoe boxes covered in paper (or diaper-wipe containers) clearly marked with the upper and lower case of the each letter
- Small plastic jars
- Three sorting containers clearly labeled with a 1, 2 and a 3
- Two 12-14 foot jump ropes (optional)
- Unbreakable hand mirrors (four or more) or a long unbreakable wardrobe mirror mounted sideways

BASIC CLASSROOM SUPPLIES

As you know, many preschool activities require the same materials in different arrangements. A list of basic classroom materials along with additional materials and storybooks needed to complete the Galileo G3 Activities is provided in the *Galileo Online Pre-K Curriculum Guidebook,* online help, or in the Galileo Pre-K Professional Development Forum.