

INTEREST CENTER VS. PLAY AREA

What's the Difference?

A **Play Area** is a space where play materials are provided for children to use.

These areas may be used for various types of play materials.

An **Interest Center** is a clearly defined play area for a particular kind of play.

These centers enrich children's play and ensure there is enough space for different activities.

What is needed to be an interest center?

Clear Definition

This means that areas should be “defined” for dramatic play, art, blocks, etc.

Organization & Storage

In well-organized spaces, materials are organized by type and stored so they are accessible to the children.

This makes it clear to children where materials can be found, where they may be used, and where they should be stored.

Children can see and reach all play materials and can easily grab what they want to explore independently.

Furniture

In defined interest centers, furniture is provided for use of the materials, if needed.

Appropriate amount of space

Interest centers should provide an appropriate amount of space for the type of play being encouraged by the materials and the number of children allowed to play in the center.

Additional considerations include:

- Size of spaces (including room for the provider)
- Crowding
- Traffic patterns